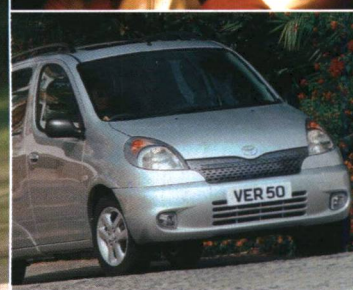
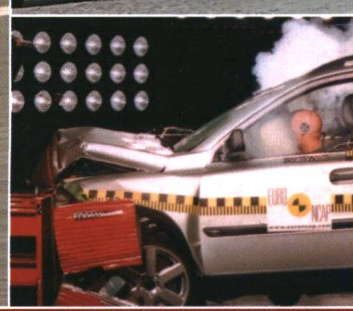
WHICH? CAR





2003/2004

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Printing
St Ives (Caerphilly) Ltd

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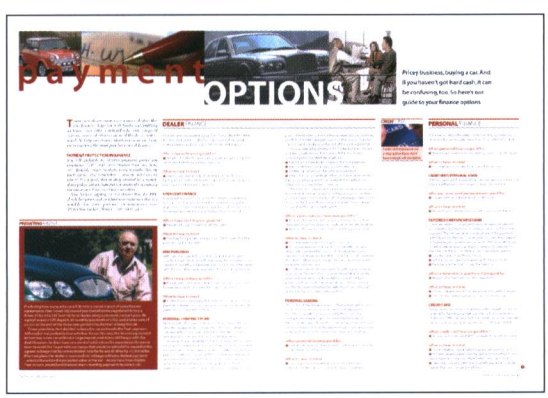
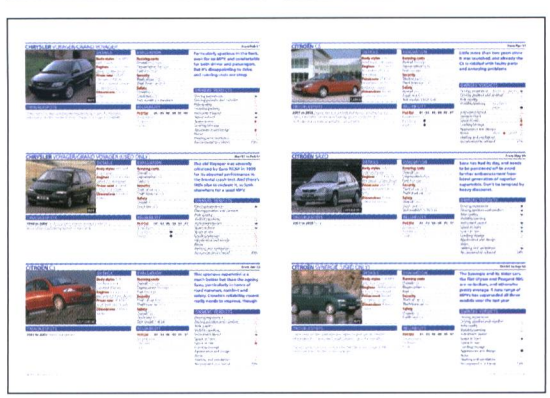
HELP WANTED

We need your views on the following cars: Audi A3 (from Jul 03), Audi A8 (from Nov 02), Citroën C8, Ford Fusion, Honda Accord (from Mar 03), Hyundai Getz, Jaguar XJ (from May 03), Kia Carens (from Nov 02), Mazda 2, Renault Espace (from Mar 03), Saab 9-3 Sports Saloon (from Sep 02), Skoda Superb. Contact details, plus phone number, model of car, and when you took delivery of it, to Dept NL, PO Box 44, Hertford X, SG14 1SH. Email helpwanted@which.net





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best BUYS

Our Best Buys are the finest of today's new cars. They've earned their spurs in all of the key areas that are important to car buyers – reliability, owner satisfaction, safety, security and running costs.

We've also listed the other cars that we think are worth considering. Sometimes, these are almost up there with the best but have one or two drawbacks – good safety and security but a slightly iffy reliability record, say. Other times, they're recently launched models which show early promise but for which we need more concrete data on satisfaction and reliability before we can give them our ultimate accolade.

SUPERMINIS

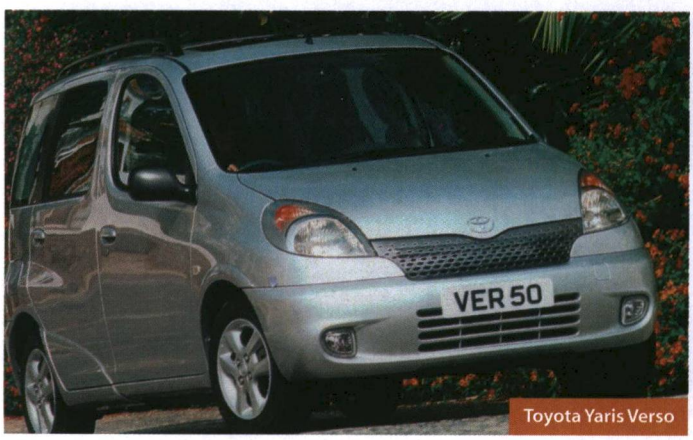
Toyota Yaris

BEST BUYS

The best superminis these days really are jacks of all trades – and they're even becoming masters of some. Our favourites are the **Toyota Yaris** and **Yaris Verso**, and the **Honda Jazz**. The Yaris keeps its Best Buy crown for the third year running, while the Jazz is the new kid on the block. They offer peerless reliability and it's a dead heat for safety. However, the Jazz stands a better chance than the Toyotas of keeping thieves at bay – an important asset in the natural habitat for these cars, the city streets.

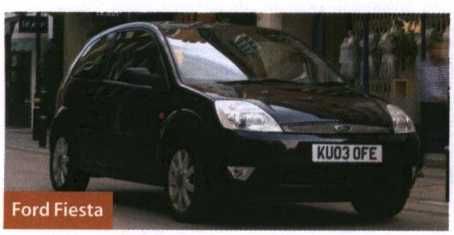
WORTH CONSIDERING

If none of these suits, consider the **Ford Fiesta**. It scores well in most areas but high depreciation means it's expensive to run. Owners are curiously unenthusiastic about it, too. You couldn't say that about the new **Mini**, though – people love it; so much so that it has very little depreciation. Anyone sitting in the back might be less impressed, however, and it's not great for lugging cargo around. Another close contender is the **VW Polo**, a good all-rounder but let down by poor protection from thieves out to steal valuables. There's also a question mark over the reliability of VW cars – see p18.



Toyota Yaris Verso

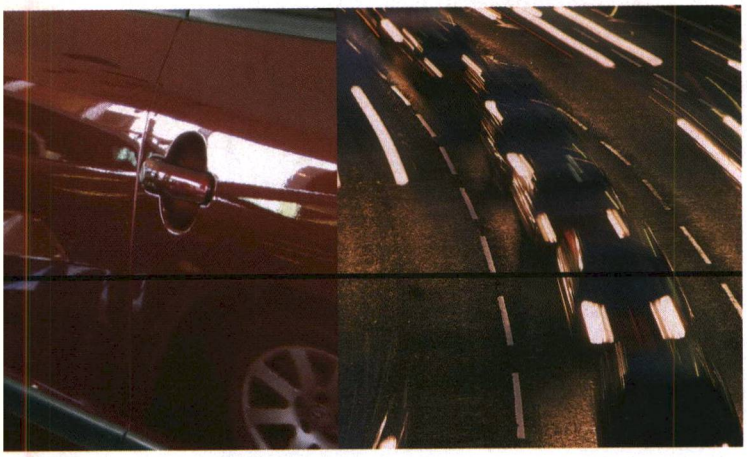
Honda Jazz



Ford Fiesta

Mini

VW Polo



Whether you're after a cheeky city runabout or a luxurious motorway cruiser, here are this year's *Which? Car* Best Buys

MEDIUM CARS

Ford Focus

BEST BUYS

There's a familiar look to our recommendations in this class, with both the **Ford Focus** and the **Honda Civic** staying in the top spot. This year, they're joined by the **Nissan Almera** and **Toyota Corolla**, the latter hardly a stranger to Best Buy status in many of its previous incarnations. There's little to choose between all four, so try before you buy. And, when you test-drive the Focus, bear in mind that Ford dealers get a pasting in our survey of dealer service (see p19) – so, if you're buying from a franchised dealer, look for one that seems helpful. The Civic is the one to go for if you want lots of space in the back.

WORTH CONSIDERING

There are three other cars in this class that we think are worth a look. The **Seat Leon** can't match our Best Buys for reliability but owners rate it highly and say it's great to drive. It is tricky to park, though, and offers easy pickings for passing thieves. The new **Renault Mégane** is worth a mention for its class-leading levels of safety and security. But don't expect a painless relationship with the Mégane – Renault is one of the worst brands for overall reliability, and our survey rates its dealers as pretty dismal, too. The left-field choice in this car class is the **Subaru Impreza**. It's the one for keen drivers who don't mind putting up with poor storage space and high fuel costs.

Seat Leon

Renault Mégane

Subaru Impreza

Honda Civic

Nissan Almera

Toyota Corolla

LARGE CARS

BEST BUYS

The large-car class is really two classes in one. At the more prosaic end, the **Nissan Primera** is top dog. It's a good all-rounder which owners score highly on all fronts except ride quality and boot space. At the premium end, our choices are the **Lexus IS200/IS300** and the ubiquitous **BMW 3 series** – both retaining their Best Buy status from last year. If the Alan Partridge connection doesn't put you off, the Lexus offers a good driving experience and should keep you away from the mechanics – though you'll be making lots of fuel stops. The BMW is more frugal than the Lexus and also better for security.

WORTH CONSIDERING

If the Primera isn't your cup of tea, try the **Honda Accord**, **Rover 75**, **Skoda Octavia**, **Subaru Legacy** or **Toyota Avensis**. We don't have any survey data on the latest Accord or Avensis, but the early signs are good and both Honda and Toyota are among the most reliable brands. The Avensis achieved an impressive five out of five in the Euro NCAP crash tests. The Rover 75 is only average for reliability but owners rate it highly. People love their Skoda Octavias, too. On the other hand, car thieves also have good reason to love Octavias – it's all too easy to break in and steal any valuables from inside. The soon-to-be-discontinued Subaru Legacy came out very well in our satisfaction survey as well.

At the luxury end of the class, the **Audi A4** is a good choice. We need further evidence that old reliability gremlins have been tackled before giving it a wholehearted thumbs up, though. And the **Jaguar X-type** is worth taking for a spin. It's safe and reasonably secure but running costs are high. Keeping a **Mercedes-Benz C-Class** also requires deep pockets. There are compensations, but Mercedes' declining reliability is a worry. The new **Saab 9-3** is very good for safety and security but it's too recently launched to feature in our survey. Safety and security are also strong suits for the highly-rated **Volvo S60**. Interestingly, the S60's reliability so far is looking better than the Volvo norm.

Honda Accord

Rover 75

Skoda Octavia

Subaru Legacy

Toyota Avensis

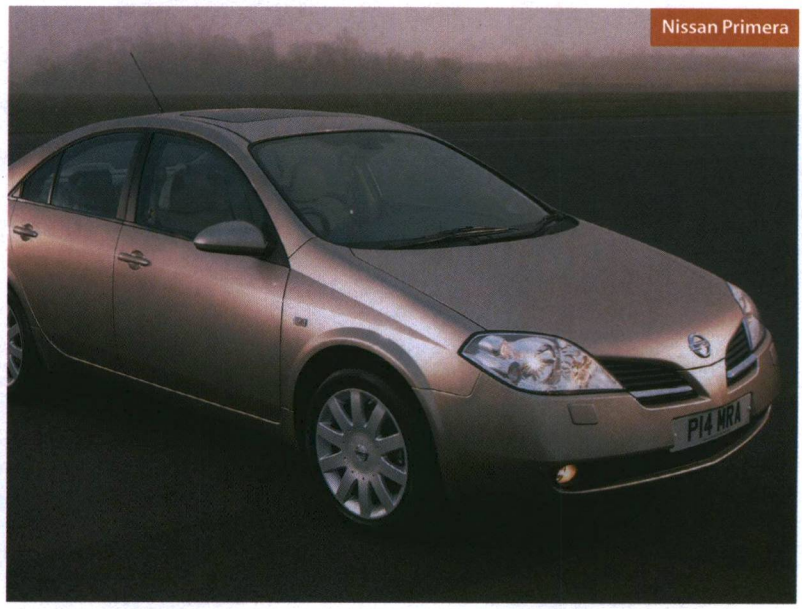
Audi A4

Jaguar X-type

Mercedes-Benz C-Class

Saab 9-3

Volvo S60


Nissan Primera

BMW 3 series

Lexus IS200/IS300

LUXURY CARS

BEST BUYS

It was surprisingly hard for us to find Best Buys in this rarefied class – most of the leading contenders are either being phased out or have significant defects. However, the **Jaguar S-type** makes the grade this year, thanks to lavish praise from owners and some impressive scores for safety and security. The S-type's reliability is only average, and space for luggage and passengers is limited. But the driving experience is superb and it does just enough to claim the Best Buy crown.

WORTH CONSIDERING

Other contenders for the stressed executive are the **Lexus GS300**, **Mercedes E-Class** and the **Volvo S80**. We don't have safety and security scores for the expensive-to-run Lexus but owners rate it very highly. The new E-Class is up with the best for safety and security but there are some question marks over Mercedes' reliability. The Volvo S80 has an odd reliability record, too. It doesn't seem to break down much, but it does seem to suffer from irritating faults. Owners still like it, though, and safety levels are excellent.

Jaguar S-type

Lexus GS300

Mercedes-Benz E-Class

Volvo S80

OFF ROADERS

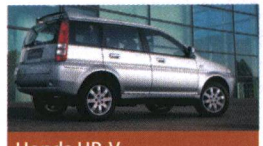
WORTH CONSIDERING

There are no Best Buys in this class because most people buy them as style statements rather than workhorses – we can't guarantee how good they are as mud-pluggers. However, the undisputed king of the hill as far as owners are concerned is the expensive **BMW X5**. It won a fantastic endorsement in our satisfaction survey and scored full marks in its latest Euro NCAP crash test.

But if you haven't won the lottery recently, you might need to turn to the Japanese – the **Honda CR-V**, **Honda HR-V**, **Nissan X-Trail** and **Toyota RAV4** are all worth a look. They come with plenty of owners' endorsements and high levels of reliability.

Toyota RAV4

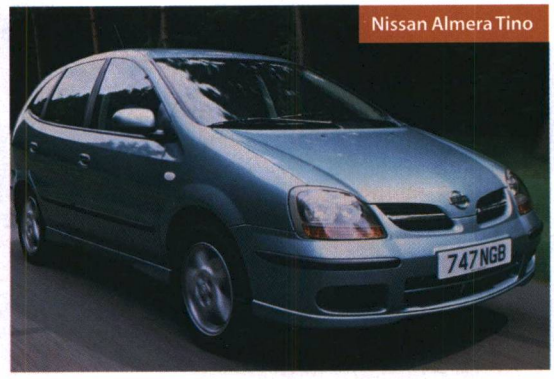
Honda CR-V


Honda HR-V

Nissan X-Trail

BMW X5

MPVs



Nissan Almera Tino

BEST BUYS

If you're after a small five-seater MPV, the **Nissan Almera Tino** is our sole Best Buy in the people-carrier class. It scores well in most respects and is liked by owners. None of the full-sized MPVs is good enough to be a Best Buy – many of the biggest sellers seem to suffer from poor reliability.

WORTH CONSIDERING

We don't have any detailed feedback from drivers about the **Honda Stream** yet, but it scores well for safety and, if Honda's track record is anything to go by, it's likely to prove reliable. We're less confident about recommending the **Citroën Xsara Picasso** and **Fiat Multipla** because both brands have poor reputations for reliability. That said, the relatively new Xsara Picasso is showing average reliability so far – only time will tell if it can keep that up in the years to come. And owners rate the distinctive-looking Fiat Multipla highly, though it does have poor security and crash test results.

If you need a big MPV, check out the **Toyota Avensis Verso** and **Toyota Previa**. We don't have full sets of data on them but the signs are good – Toyotas are very reliable and our tests show the Avensis Verso is a safe and secure car.

Honda Stream

Citroën Xsara Picasso

Fiat Multipla

Toyota Avensis Verso

Toyota Previa

buying NEW

Showroom staff have well-rehearsed routines to help you part with your cash. If you're going to sidestep the slick sales patter, you need to know what you want before you set foot in the sales room. That much will never change, so here's our guide to buying the right new car without paying over the odds. What is set to change radically, though, is the way new cars are sold – thanks to upheavals in European Union (EU) legislation.

NO EXEMPTION

Not that long ago, franchised dealers were the only places where you could buy a new car. Dealers sold just one make, and were the approved repairer. This 'selective and exclusive' trading – for distribution, sales and service – was allowed under what's called the EU's Block Exemption. In other words, car manufacturers were exempt from the free-trade rules to which the EU aspires.

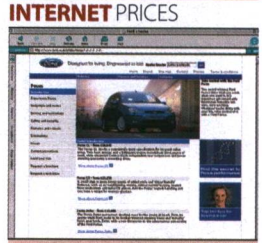
That led to car prices in the UK being higher than in other European countries. For example, in 2000, an EU investigation found that we were paying about 10 per cent too much for the average car, compared with our European chums.

Which? and Consumers' Association have long campaigned for this to change through our 'Rip-off Britain' campaign. Now, thankfully, the industry is starting to transform. Raised awareness, people's willingness to vote with their feet, and the continued spread of the internet have all played a part in bringing down car prices. But there's an even bigger change afoot. In October last year, the EU began to overhaul the Block Exemption.

This first year has been a transition period, with regulations coming into fuller effect soon. Even so, the transition has seen plenty of activity. Some car makers are poised to cancel contracts with dealerships, and set up with new retail partners. There's been activity among dealers, too, with mergers and acquisitions as they prepare to bid for new contracts with manufacturers. And some banks are also getting in on the action – The Royal Bank of Scotland and Lloyds TSB have both taken over franchised dealers.

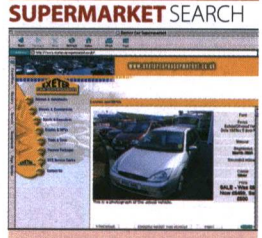
However, the biggest changes will take place in two years' time, when there will be further amendments to sales, service and parts-supply rules. At the moment, it's too early to be sure of all the benefits but, eventually, we expect to see banks, supermarkets and high-street stores selling cars at more competitive prices than today's.

INTERNET PRICES



Internet prices provide handy bargaining chips for when you visit the forecourt

SUPERMARKET SEARCH



Carsupermarkets.co.uk will tell you where your nearest car supermarket is located

WHERE TO BUY

UK DEALERS

Many UK dealer prices have been falling fairly quickly recently. Between January and April this year, the UK dealer price of an average family hatchback previously costing £12,000 fell by about £345.

Pros

- You can haggle over price, especially on older models.
- You can part-exchange your old car.
- You can order the specification you want.
- Cars are available to look at and test-drive.
- There's someone to answer questions.

Cons

- It's often more expensive than the other options.
- Part-exchange isn't usually the best way to maximise the return on your old car (see 'Selling a car', p14).

CAR SUPERMARKETS

Car supermarkets buy cars in large quantities, usually models the manufacturer is having difficulty shifting. Some of these are pre-registered – already 'on the road' and with a few miles on the clock – so you can snap them up for less than the full retail price.

Pros

- Competitive prices compared with franchised dealers.
- You can test-drive the actual car you buy.
- You should be offered finance deals if you want them.

Cons

- They sell models the manufacturer can't shift, so you can't usually order specific options.
- If the car's pre-registered, it may have a shortened warranty, having spent time after registration in storage.
- You probably won't be able to haggle on price.

EU IMPORTS

Recently, the falling value of the pound against the euro has reduced the advantages of importing. However, you can still make savings on some models by importing. Price advantages vary, depending on the model you're after and the tax regime in the country from which you import. There are two ways you can go about it – by yourself or through an agent. For more detail, you can order a copy of our January factsheet by phoning us on 0845 307 4000 and quoting reference CARIMP.

Personal imports

Think carefully before trying this route. Personal imports are easier than they once were but still require a lot of homework. You need to find a dealer in another country, check it can meet your needs, and then do a deal.

Don't pay over the odds for your new car – prepare for your purchase with our guide to where to buy and how to get the lowest price

Pros
- Savings are still possible on some models.

Cons
- It takes a lot of time and effort.
- Currency fluctuations can throw your calculations.
- Price comparisons are difficult because contract terms and vehicle specifications may vary between companies.
- You'll have to collect the car from the European dealer.
- You're unlikely to be offered a finance deal.
- You could run into language difficulties.

Import agents
If importing the car yourself seems too much like hard work, try an import agent. They'll deliver the car to your door, or at least to a UK port. Savings from importing have fallen, so some agents are struggling to be competitive.

Pros
- Savings are still possible on some models.
- It doesn't require as much effort as a personal import.

Cons
- They face similar problems to personal importers.
- Delivery times can be unreliable.
- It can be tricky to establish what's included in the price.
- You may be asked for a deposit before the import agent confirms the final delivery date.

THE INTERNET
You can buy over the internet from car supermarkets and import agents, as well as direct from the manufacturer. Manufacturers' websites sometimes undercut their own on-the-road price, but, if you go to a dealer after looking at the website, you can be fairly confident of getting the same reduction. However you buy, always try a car before parting with your cash.

Manufacturers' sites usually offer a range of services, including finance, insurance and full warranty, though it is worth double-checking. Other sites may offer finance and insurance, but you'll need to check the warranty.

Pros
- The same range of products as are available from a dealer, but without the sales spiel.
- Even if you don't buy online, you can still use price comparisons when negotiating with a dealer.

Cons
- You're unlikely to be able to haggle over price.
- Most sites don't offer part-exchange.
- Terms and conditions may be less generous than those offered by dealers on the forecourt.

HOW TO BUY

PLANNING YOUR PURCHASE
- List your priorities in order – safety, security, reliability, storage space and so on. Decide which of these aspects are essential and which you could give way on.
- Short-list the cars that you'll want to look at. You can use our summaries, which start on p21, to help.
- Test-drive a car that's as close as possible to the specification you want. Don't accept a ten-minute ride with the salesperson at your side. If you can, try the car for a day or a weekend. You may need to hire it to do this, but you'll get a much more realistic experience.
- Drive along routes you use regularly. Try it on all types of road, including a motorway if possible. Carry the number of passengers you'd usually expect to be taxiing around. And check that there's enough room in the boot for a trip to the shops or a family's worth of holiday luggage. Also, make sure that you try any fancy features that seemed like a good idea in the showroom – the reality can be disappointing.

GETTING A GOOD DEAL
- Always have an idea of what a reasonable price would be before you start. For sources to check, see 'Contacts', p67.
- The end of the month is often a good time to buy because it coincides with the end of the sales month. Dealers with targets to meet will be keener to cut a deal, to help them reach their targets and get a bonus.
- Prices fluctuate depending on the time of year, when new models arrive, and dealer promotions. Keep a lookout in motoring magazines and on websites.
- If you're going to a dealer, check online prices first. Find the lowest and use it to talk the salesperson down.
- With most of the big makes – such as Ford, Toyota, Vauxhall and VW – you can play dealers off against each other. For example, you could use two Ford dealers in adjacent towns to drive the price down.
- If you're doing a trade-in and the dealer is reluctant to discount the list price, you might have better luck haggling about the price of your trade-in. Do your research, tell the dealer how much you'd expect to receive by selling privately, and try to edge them up.
- Compare the interest rates of any finance deals offered. By haggling over the interest rate, you might make big savings even if the dealer won't budge on the price.
- If a car has obviously been used for test drives, you're more likely to cut a good deal. You could try asking dealers whether they have any demonstration cars they're ready to sell.
- Take someone to the dealership with you who doesn't have a stake in your new purchase. They might spot things which you gloss over in your excitement.
- Don't be too keen. If the dealer senses this, there's less chance that he'll budge on the price.
- Sleep on it. Even after you've negotiated the detail, don't be afraid to say that you'll go home and think about it.

CUTTING COSTS

Try playing off dealers in adjacent towns against each other to lower the price

buying USED

Used-car prices are falling year on year, so there are plenty of opportunities out there for bargain seekers. Heavy depreciation – coupled with improving reliability and longer warranties – makes buying a second-hand car an attractive proposition.

And hunting round for a used car can also be a lot of fun, especially when the hard work is over and you pull away in your ideal car with a few quid still in your pocket. However, there are more than a few pitfalls to look out for, especially if you're buying from a private seller or an auction house. If the wheels fall off as soon as you get round the first corner, it can spoil the experience a bit. So here's our guide to buying a reliable, bargain-priced second-hand car.

WHERE TO BUY

DEALERS

Dealers range from franchised outlets, which sell only fairly new, manufacturer-warranted cars, to small independent car lots, which sell a range of cheaper vehicles.

If you're not sure what you want, visit a car supermarket. These are no-nonsense places, which sell a wide range of cars at competitive prices. However, you might find that they're less keen on haggling than other dealers. They work on small profit margins and sell cars in such volume that it's often not worth their while to negotiate. You can find details of your nearest one on the carsupermarkets.co.uk website.

Whatever the type of dealership, you have stronger legal rights than you would if you bought privately. A car sold by a dealer must be 'of satisfactory quality', 'reasonably fit for any normal purpose' and 'as described'. If it's not, as long as you act quickly, you are entitled to compensation to fix the problem or your money back.

Another potential advantage of buying through a dealer is that the car may come with a warranty. But unless it's the remainder of a manufacturer's warranty, it will normally be a mechanical breakdown insurance (MBI) policy. These cover your car for certain problems and parts, but they often have important exclusions. They're not usually intended to cover all repairs and servicing. For example, they may not cover parts that need replacing to pass an MOT test. For more details, see 'The warranty maze', *Which?*, March 2002, p34.

Pros

- They give you the most comprehensive legal rights.
- Some dealers inspect cars and check their history.
- Mechanical breakdown insurance may be included.
- You can search some dealers' stock on the internet.
- Some dealers belong to trade associations. These have codes of practice which you can refer to if you run into problems. The main associations are the Retail Motor Industry Federation and the Scottish Motor Trade Association.

Cons

- It's usually the most expensive option.

PRIVATE SELLER

You have fewer legal rights if you buy privately than you would if you bought from a dealer. The car must be correctly described, but, if the seller lies about its condition, you may find that you have to go to court to get your money back. Also, you might come across dodgy characters. For example, some dealers pretend to be private sellers to avoid their legal obligations. When you're scanning adverts, look out for telltale signs of dirty dealers, such as recurring phone numbers and ads which give only a mobile number.

Classified small-ad papers – such as *Auto Trader*, *Exchange & Mart* and *Loot* – are a good place to start, and many now also offer their services online. But don't forget to check your local papers, too. And the internet is teeming with classified ads for second-hand cars – a quick search will reveal vast amounts of information about the used-car marketplace. For a more exhaustive list of places to look for used cars, check out the 'Contacts' section on p67.

Pros

- It's usually cheaper to buy privately than from a dealer.

Cons

- There are few legal rights of redress if things go wrong.
- You have to be careful to avoid unscrupulous dealers.
- You have to trust what the seller says about the car.
- You're expected to haggle, so cars are often overpriced.

AUCTION

Buying at auction is the riskiest option because you can't usually check the car thoroughly. You'll have only a limited chance to check the car over in the auction yard and watch it being driven into the auction hall.

Decide on a limit of what you're prepared to pay, and don't get carried away by the excitement of the auction. It's also important to check out the terms and conditions of the auction house, to find out exactly what kind of deal you are entering into. Try to find an auction house that belongs to the Society of Motor Auctions, which offers some protection if you have a complaint about one of its members.

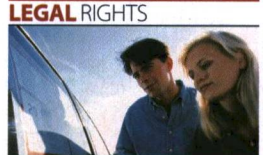
Pros

- You can find real bargains if you know what you're doing.

Cons

- Once the hammer has fallen, you can't back out.
- Your usual legal rights won't apply if the seller issues a disclaimer such as 'sold as seen'.

LEGAL RIGHTS



Buying from a dealer will give you more comprehensive legal rights than other options

On the lookout for a bargain? Follow our tips for a first-class experience when you buy second-hand

HOW TO BUY

DO YOUR RESEARCH

Finding your way to the perfect bargain shouldn't be too hard if you plan your purchase systematically and check the car thoroughly. Here are the basic steps you need to follow.

Check models and prices

Being flexible is the key to finding a good used car. Use the summaries, which start on p21, to identify a few possibilities. Medium and large cars and MPVs have seen the biggest drop in used-car prices over the past year, so they're a good place to look for bargains. And it's starting to look like superminis will be joining them in the next year or so.

Many motoring websites let you type in details of the cars you are interested in and will give you an idea of what is a reasonable price to pay. Also, motoring magazines publish lists of used-car values, and *Parker's Car Price Guide* has comprehensive price and specification information for a wide range of models (see 'Contacts', p67).

Arrange the test drive

Make sure that your car insurance covers you to drive the models you fancy, then phone to arrange test drives. If you suspect you're phoning a dealer masquerading as a private seller, avoid mentioning the details of the car advertised. If they seem hazy about which car you're talking about, steer clear. Many dodgy dealers will also try to avoid showing you the car at their home, so be wary of sellers who want to show you the car in a car park or other public place.

Ask the owner not to warm up the engine, so you can test it for cold-start problems before you buy. Test the car for as long as possible, and on a variety of roads. Check the general quality of the handling, but also listen for any odd noises, and test specific aspects of the car. For example, try a three-point turn to gauge the steering. Also, find a safe place and ask the owner's permission to try a couple of emergency-style stops.

Give it a physical

If you know your way around a car – or can take someone who does – you can do some simple checks yourself. Follow the checklist provided in the Office of Fair Trading's car buying guide (see 'Contacts'). Inspect the car carefully. In particular, check whether the wear and tear on the driver's seat, pedals and steering wheel looks reasonable for the number of miles on the mileometer – if it doesn't, it could be a sign that someone's fiddled with the clock to pump up the price.

Get an inspection

If you don't know how to tell a bargain from a banger, consider getting a mechanical inspection. Independent assessors (such as Automobile Buyers Services), motoring organisations (such as the AA and RAC) and local garages offer mechanical inspections for around £100 to £250. The results can provide a useful bargaining tool. However, organising an inspection can take a few days, and the car may have been sold in the meantime.

Check its history

If the car you buy is stolen, or has outstanding finance on it, you could lose it. Fortunately, you can pay for a history check. This compares the vehicle registration and identification number against lists of stolen cars, insurance write-offs, and cars with outstanding finance. It will cost around £30 to £40. See 'Contacts' for the main organisations which can help.

Alternatively, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) offers a vehicle check service which will confirm a car's date of registration, year of manufacture, engine capacity and colour. It's available through a premium-rate phone line (0906 185 8585, 49p per minute).

CHECK THE PAPERWORK

It's vital that you check the paperwork. There are three main types of information to examine – the registration document, the service records and the MOT certificates.

V5 registration document

The V5 registration document (or logbook) shows the registered keeper – but not always owner – of the vehicle. Never buy a car without a V5 document. There are stolen and fake registration documents around, so always check that the V5 you're shown is real. Things to look out for are:

- a DVLA watermark within the layers of paper
- the serial number – details of the serial numbers of stolen V5 documents can be found on the DVLA website
- the registration number (on the car's numberplate), vehicle identification number (VIN), and engine number must match those on the V5. The 17-character VIN should be on the car. You can find it on a metal plate in the engine compartment, under the bonnet, etched on the windows, or in the floor panel on the driver's side.

Service records

It's essential that you see these. Not only will they reassure you that the car's been properly serviced, they are also a good way to verify the mileage and claims about recent repairs.

MOT certificates

You shouldn't rely on an MOT certificate to prove that the car is safe or that it has a genuine history. The MOT is simply proof of the car's roadworthiness on the day of the test.

If a car is more than three years old, insist on seeing the MOT certificate. As an additional check for older cars, ask about earlier ones as well – if they state mileage, it will help to confirm whether the car's current mileage is genuine.

Stolen MOT certificates are often used to help sell stolen cars. Ring the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency's enquiry line (0845 600 5977) if you think a certificate might be fake.

PRICE RESEARCH

It's important to research the price you should expect to pay – internet price guides can help

payment OPT

These days almost every car retailer will also offer you finance. Together with banks and building societies, they offer a befuddlingly wide range of options, some of which can be difficult to understand. To help you choose which one suits you best, we've outlined the most popular types of finance.

PAYMENT PROTECTION INSURANCE

You will probably be offered payment protection insurance (PPI) with any finance that you take out. Indeed, many lenders even include this in their quote. But remember – you do not have to take it. It's a good idea to shop around for a stand-alone policy, rather than just automatically accepting the insurance that your financier offers.

Also, before signing on the dotted line for PPI, check the terms and conditions to make sure that it's suitable for your personal circumstances (see 'Protection racket', *Which?*, July 2002, p12).

PREDICTING MILEAGE

Predicting how many miles you'll drive is a crucial aspect of some finance agreements. Alan Green discovered just that when he negotiated to buy a Rover 25 for £10,195 from his local dealer, using a personal contract plan. He agreed to pay a £99 deposit, 35 monthly payments of £192, and a lump sum of £3,557 at the end of the three-year period if he decided to keep the car.

Three years later, he's decided to keep the car and made the final payment. Although it was probably dearer to buy the car this way, the finance agreement let him buy a new car without a large deposit, and Alan's still happy with the deal. However, he does have one word of advice from his experience. He was so keen to avoid the 7p per mile surcharge that would be added if he exceeded the agreed mileage that he overestimated how far he would drive by 15,000 miles. If he had given the dealer a more realistic mileage estimate, the last payment – which is based on the projected value of the car – would have been higher. That, in turn, would have lowered Alan's monthly payments by about £40.

DEALER FINANCE

Dealers' rates are usually higher than those offered by other lenders. Most of them offer hire purchase and personal contract plans, and some also offer 0 per cent finance.

Who's dealer finance good for?

- People who like the convenience of buying their car and arranging their finance in the same place.

What to bear in mind

- You usually have to pay an 'arrangement' or 'finance facility' fee, typically between £75 and £95, and an 'option to purchase' fee of around £25 to £55.

0 PER CENT FINANCE

Paying upfront with hard cash is the simplest way to buy, but you could be missing a trick. It's possible to pay the deposit on a 0 per cent finance deal, then collect interest on the remainder until the end of the free-finance period.

Who's 0 per cent finance good for?

- People with good financial self-discipline.

What to bear in mind

- You may face penalty charges if you fail to make the final payment by the due date.

HIRE PURCHASE

With hire purchase (HP), you first pay an initial deposit, usually at least 10 per cent. Then you pay the remainder, with interest, in monthly instalments. The interest rate often varies with the size of the deposit and the duration of the contract.

Who's hire purchase good for?

- People who want dealer finance and are sure they want to own their car at the end of the payment period.

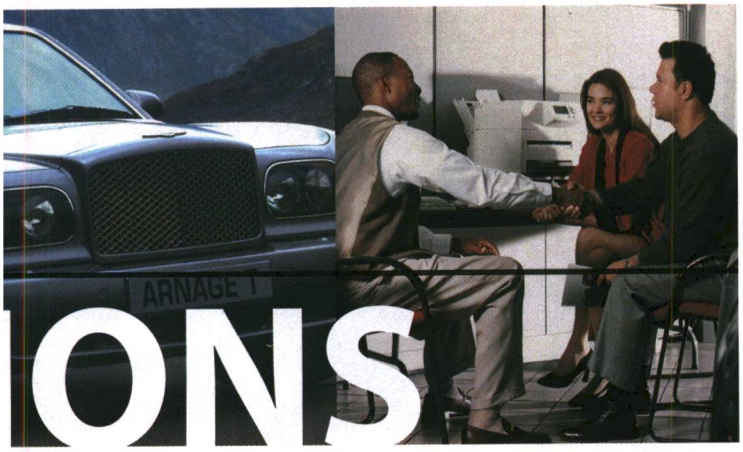
What to bear in mind

- It's the finance company that owns the car until the final payment is made, not you. The car isn't yours to sell until the payment is completely settled.

PERSONAL CONTRACT PLAN

Here, as with HP, you pay a deposit but don't own the car until the final payment is made. The difference is that you can also defer a lump sum until the end of the contract, which reduces the size of your monthly payments.

How much you can defer to that final lump sum is based on what the dealer thinks the car will be worth at the end of the personal contract plan. So, when you take out a contract plan, you will have to agree with the dealer on a 'minimum guaranteed future value' for your car. This is the minimum value the dealer will place on the car at the end of the payment period, and is equal to the deferred lump sum. It is



ONS

Pricey business, buying a car. And, if you haven't got hard cash, it can be confusing, too. So here's our guide to your finance options

partly determined by the number of miles that you estimate you'll drive. And it's also calculated on the proviso that the car is in 'good condition' at the end of the contract period.

You pay a monthly premium for the term of the contract, which is usually two or three years. At the end of the contract period, you have four options:

- hand the car back to the dealer as the final payment
- pay the deferred lump sum and keep the car
- sell the car privately to fund the final payment
- return the car to the dealer. If the car is now worth more than you initially agreed, you can trade it in and use the difference as a deposit on a new car.

The minimum guaranteed future value is a crucial factor in a personal contract plan. If it's set too low, your monthly payments won't show the benefit of deferring a lump sum. If it's set too high, you'll have to pay the dealer more to keep the car than the car is actually worth.

Who's a personal purchase plan good for?

- People who want to drive a new car every two or three years, and don't mind bearing the brunt of the depreciation.
- People who want to keep their monthly payments low.

What to bear in mind

- It's a relatively expensive way to buy a car.
- If you plan to return the car at the end of the period, it's important to remember that you'll be penalised if you exceed the mileage limit or if the car isn't in 'good condition'. The dealer will probably require the car to be inspected for excessive wear and tear.
- Any finance that relies on predicting the future value of your car can be risky. Used-car prices have fallen in recent years and look set to continue falling – but it's tricky to predict by how much. This kind of finance tends to work best for the brands that traditionally depreciate least, such as Audi, BMW, Lexus, Mercedes, and VW.

PERSONAL LEASING

This is one of the cheaper ways to drive a new car, but you'll never own it. Instead, you make fixed monthly payments to hire it for a specified period, typically three years. For example, you might make one initial payment, equal to three months' hire, followed by 35 monthly instalments. With some schemes, the monthly payment can cover all running costs, such as servicing, breakdown cover and road tax.

Who's personal leasing good for?

- People who want to drive a newer car but don't want the hassle of owning it themselves.

What to bear in mind

- You might incur penalties if you exceed the agreed mileage, or if the car isn't returned in 'good condition'.

CREDIT CARDS

Credit card finance can be a risky option if you don't have enough self-discipline

PERSONAL FINANCE

The interest rates offered by banks, building societies and other lenders are usually lower than those offered by dealers.

Who's personal finance good for?

- Anyone who wants the negotiating power of a cash buyer.

What to bear in mind

- You may face a penalty if you pay off a loan early.

UNSECURED PERSONAL LOAN

With an unsecured personal loan, the loan period is fixed and your monthly payments repay the loan plus interest.

Who are unsecured personal loans good for?

- People with an unblemished credit history.

What to bear in mind

- Interest rates sometimes vary with your circumstances.

DEFERRED CAR PURCHASE LOAN

These are similar to unsecured personal loans but take into account the fact that you can sell your car to fund the final payment. They let you defer a large chunk of the payment until the end of the loan. The amount you can defer depends on how long you wait before paying it off. It's typically 60 per cent if you defer for a year, down to around 25 per cent for four years. At the end of the loan, you have three options:

- pay the balance and keep the car
- sell the car and pay the balance with the proceeds
- take out another loan to pay the balance.

Who's a deferred car purchase loan good for?

- People who want low monthly payments.

What to bear in mind

- You're charged interest on the whole amount borrowed.
- The car may depreciate more than you expected.

CREDIT CARD

Many card issuers have low-interest offers, usually for the first six months. Also, buying with a credit card gives you extra protection if the car has a fault: the credit card issuer is usually jointly liable on transactions between £100 and £30,000.

Who's credit card finance good for?

- People with high credit limits and plenty of self-discipline.

What to bear in mind

- Some retailers charge a fee for processing credit cards.
- If you're card hopping, you may get stranded without a new low-interest introductory offer to which you can switch.
- After introductory offers, the monthly payment could be higher than one on a personal loan.

selling A CAR

You can save hundreds of pounds on the price of a new car by shopping around. But you could also be throwing money away if you don't get the best price for your old one

Taking your old car into a dealer and part-exchanging it for a new one is the easiest option for the lazybones among us. However, if you're prepared to put in a little bit of elbow grease, you could make a much tidier sum by selling your car privately. Here are the four steps to getting the best price.

1 GETTING STARTED

Before you set about drafting adverts and arranging test drives, it's important to do a bit of background research into the market for your car.

- Find out how much you can expect to receive for your car. There are a number of monthly price guides, such as *Parker's Car Price Guide*, available from newsagents and on the internet. For more details, see 'Contacts', p67.
- Browsing used-car websites and classified ads will also give you a good idea of what other private sellers and dealers are asking. There's an enormous number of places to look for these. As well as the traditional route of local papers, free-ad papers (such as *Loot*) and trading papers (such as *Auto Trader*), you can search car-sales websites. They're easy to search and contain lots of entries. Again, see 'Contacts' for a more exhaustive list of where to look.
- Remember these prices are only a guide and will vary according to the condition and mileage of your car. So take special note of any cars which seem to be similar to yours. Also, don't expect to receive top whack if you can't provide essential paperwork, such as proof of a full service history.

2 PREPARING YOUR CAR

A bit of time and money spent readying the car and gathering together paperwork could result in a quicker and more profitable sale.

- Give the car a service, get a new MOT and try to make sure that there's at least six months' road tax remaining on it.
- Create a buyer's pack of the essential paperwork for your car. Include the V5 logbook, MOT certificates, service history details and receipts from repairs.
- Repair or replace any missing trim or badges. Try a local breaker's yard for cheap replacements. You can find your nearest one by looking in *Yellow Pages*.
- Repair any minor scratches or paint chips with a paint touch-up stick.
- When you're ready for viewings, wash the car with a quality car shampoo. Pay particular attention to the sills, wheel arches, and inner door panels to create a 'well looked after' image. Also, give it a thorough polish (for more on which car polish to choose, see *Which?*, September 2003, p38).
- Under the bonnet, top up the oil, water and coolant bottles. Wipe away grime and oil stains in the engine bay.
- Vacuum the interior thoroughly. Clean the interior plastic with a low-gloss polish and wipe the windows with a damp chamois leather. Don't go overboard with air fresheners but, if necessary, give the fabric a quick spray with an odour neutraliser and remove any old dirty floormats.

3 DRAFTING YOUR ADVERT

Most importantly, from a legal point of view, any description of the car must be true. The most pertinent information to include is:

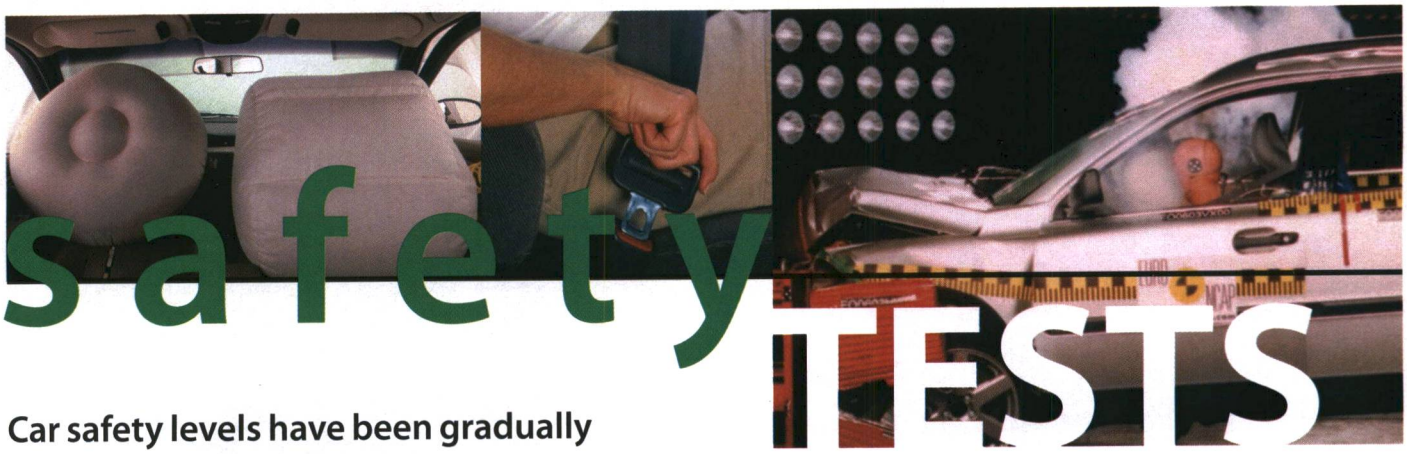
- the make, model, engine size, trim spec, number of doors and body type
- year and registration letter. A precise '1999/T' is much more helpful than a vague 'T-reg' or '2000 model-year'
- whether you have a copy of the full service history. This is especially good to mention if all the servicing has been carried out by a franchised dealer
- mileage, so the buyer can gauge whether the price is reasonable
- details of any recent MOT or service, and the length of remaining any road tax time and MOT
- new parts, but only if they are substantial – for example, tyres or a clutch
- colour, especially if it's a popular one or is in metallic paint
- the features that make your car stand out from others, but also list the ones that are more appealing to the average buyer. For example, it's probably good to mention air conditioning, the alarm or central locking before waxing lyrical about your furry dice
- only statements that you can prove. Also, don't use trite clichés, such as 'one lady owner' – you can make better use of the space.

It's possible that when your ad appears, you will be contacted by companies which offer to sell your car for you. Often, they claim to already have buyers lined up, waiting to buy your model. Never agree to sell your car through a service like this without first checking that it's genuine.

4 DEALING WITH BUYERS

Selling your car privately could provide a chance for someone to nick it. Here are a few tips to help you avoid being taken for a ride.

- Take the caller's name and number, and offer to phone them back. You can check their contact details are genuine before you give them your address.
- Make sure that you let only people who are properly insured test-drive your car. Ask buyers to bring their insurance certificate with them.
- Never let anyone test-drive alone. Don't accept their car keys as security because there's no guarantee they own the car they drove up in.
- Sit in the car yourself before you hand over the keys and don't get out to swap seats with the keys in the ignition. You can reduce the chances of the car being stolen by taking a friend along with you.
- For cash sales, try to arrange the handover of money, keys and registration document in your bank or building society. You can bank the cash right away and ask the cashier to check that it's not forged.
- If the buyer wants to give you a cheque, it's safer to insist on a building society cheque or banker's draft.
- Ask the buyer to give you the cheque number and name of their bank or building society, so you can call them to confirm the cheque is genuine.



safety TESTS

Car safety levels have been gradually improving over the years– but some makes are pulling ahead of others

The European-wide crash test programme that *Which?* helped to set up, Euro NCAP, has had a major influence on the attention manufacturers pay to safety. They've finally come to realise that safety sells. However, it's still well worth checking out our safety ratings – there are some substantial differences between the class leaders and the least safe cars. If the worst ever came to the worst, you might be very glad you knew the score before buying your car.

OUR TESTS

We show two types of rating for the cars we've analysed. The first is for the results of Euro NCAP's crash test results. The second is based on our experts' overall assessment.

Crash tests These scores reflect how well the cars perform in a series of precisely controlled crash tests. They compare cars only within classes because, generally speaking, big cars protect their occupants better than small cars. So, for example, a luxury car is safer than a supermini with the same crash test score. The maximum score is five.

Overall safety This rating is a wider analysis of cars' safety, based on our experts' assessments of their safety features and design. Scores are adjusted to allow comparisons between classes, so you can compare a luxury car's score with a supermini's.

The overall rating is also called a 'secondary' safety rating, because it takes account of what happens in a crash. Like the crash tests, it doesn't allow for factors such as the quality of the brakes, which help avoid crashes and determine 'primary' safety.

SAFETY DESIGN

Overall safety is determined by a myriad of design features – some which are now becoming standard, and others which aren't widely implemented.

Airbags Airbags are one of the most effective safety features. And some manufacturers are applying them in innovative new ways. For example, one persistent problem with car design is the potential for severe injuries caused by the drivers' legs being thrown against the steering column in crashes. The Toyota Avensis is the first car to deploy an effective new way of combating this – the knee airbag.

Side airbags are becoming more common. The more well-designed cars use seat-mounted side airbags rather than door-mounted ones. If you have a particularly tall or short build, and need to move the seat, a seat-mounted airbag will still be in the right position to protect you.

Other features Other important safety aspects include head-restraint design and seat-belt reminder systems. But there are less obvious points, too. For example, if the rear seat isn't robust or its latch isn't properly secured, rear passengers may be in danger. In a crash, luggage in the boot can come flying into the cabin, causing serious injury. Manufacturers have started to introduce effective safety measures; now they need to make sure that the remaining areas – such as rear-seat safety – are looked at too.

TOP SAFETY

The Volvo S80 is the safest car we've ever tested

LATEST RESULTS

Our most recent batch of tests reveal a new class leader, in the shape of the Renault Mégane, as well as a worst-in-class performance from Citroën's Berlingo.

SUPERMINIS	Crash tests	Overall safety
Hyundai Getz 1.1	n/a	Fair
Mazda 2 1.4	n/a	Fair
Nissan Micra 1.2	4/5	Poor
Smart Cabrio Passion 0.6	n/a	Poor
Suzuki Alto 1.1	n/a	Poor

MEDIUM CARS	Crash tests	Overall safety
Renault Mégane 1.4	5/5	Fair

LARGE CARS	Crash tests	Overall safety
Honda Accord 2.0	4/5	Good
Toyota Avensis 1.8	5/5	Good

LUXURY CARS	Crash tests	Overall safety
Mercedes-Benz E 2001.8	5/5	Very good

MPVs	Crash tests	Overall safety
Citroën Berlingo	n/a	Poor
Kia Carens 1.8	n/a	Fair
Mercedes-Benz Vaneo 1.6	4/5	Fair

OVERALL RESULTS

There are big differences in safety levels. Here are the safest and least safe cars in each class

SUPERMINIS	Crash tests	Overall safety
Ford Fusion 1.6	n/a	Fair
Citroën Saxo 1.1	2/5	Poor

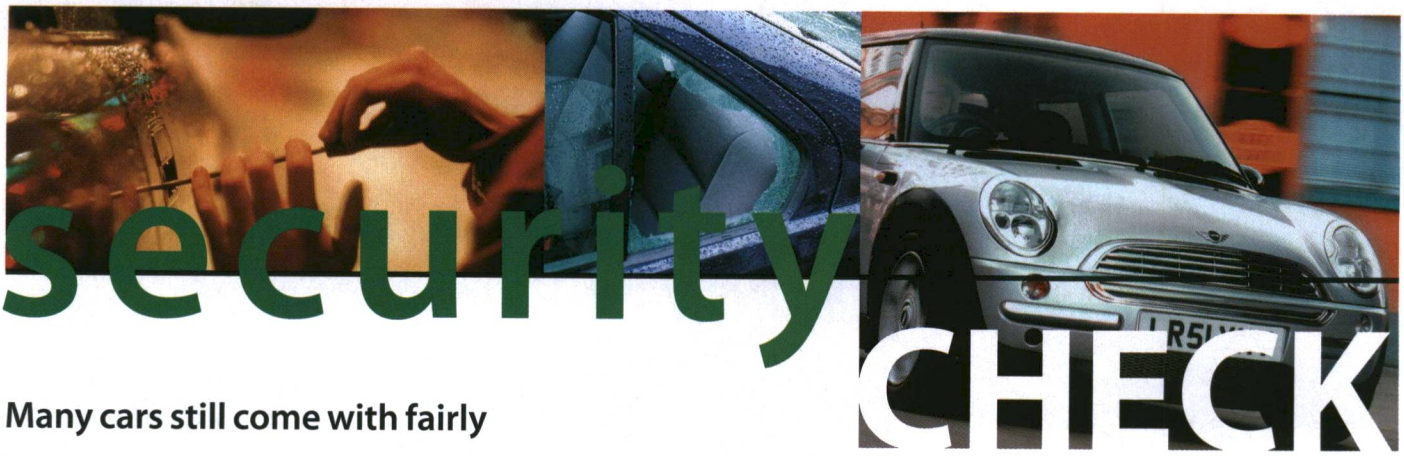
MEDIUM CARS	Crash tests	Overall safety
Renault Mégane 1.4	5/5	Fair
Proton Wira 1.5	n/a	Poor

LARGE CARS	Crash tests	Overall safety
Volvo S60 2.0	4/5	Very good
Daewoo Nubira 2.0	n/a	Fair

LUXURY CARS	Crash tests	Overall safety
Volvo S80 2.4	4/5	Very good
Vauxhall Omega 2.5	3/5	Good

MPVs	Crash tests	Overall safety
Toyota Avensis Verso 2.0	n/a	Good
Citroën Berlingo	n/a	Poor

Crash test scores are taken from the Euro NCAP crash test programme. Overall safety is derived from our own expert analysis.



security CHECK

Many cars still come with fairly lax security. To keep your belongings safe, you need to choose carefully

Most developments in car security have been towards reducing the ease with which thieves can drive away with your car. Progress in stopping them pinching valuables from cars has been less impressive. So, although some models are now pretty secure – the new Lexus LS430, with its array of security features, springs to mind – there's plenty of room for improvement on most cars. Anyone thinking about buying a Suzuki, for example, should take a good look at our ratings first.

OUR TESTS

The ratings we give are based on the ease with which our specialist technicians – who have years of experience in the dark arts of vehicle crime – can beat the cars' security. They give two scores, both out of a maximum of ten.

Theft from the car How easy it is to break into the car and steal items from the boot, seats or glove box. About two thirds of the score depends on the windows, locks and alarm system. The rest is based on the protection of pilferable items, such as the stereo.

Theft of the car How easy it is for thieves to drive away in the car. The main factors here are the immobiliser, a secure steering lock and strong door locks. We also take into account the quality of the alarm, how clearly the car is marked with its unique vehicle identification number (VIN), and other useful features, such as fuel caps that can be opened only with the ignition key.

SECURITY DESIGN

There are various modes of attack that car thieves can adopt, so manufacturers need to supply a wide range of security features. Here are some of the most effective ones you can look for.

Deadlocks The most common way for thieves to steal a car is by first forcing the locks – hardly surprising, when you realise that many cars' locks can be overcome in just a few seconds with a little bit of know-how. But good deadlocks – such as those on the new Nissan Micra – are extremely difficult to overcome. Beware, though, that some deadlocks, including the Renault Mégane's, aren't automatic, so you need to remember to set them manually.

Laminated glass If they can't overcome the locks, many thieves will simply smash their way in through the side window. The standard toughened glass used on most cars isn't difficult to break. But there is an alternative – laminated glass. Any thief who wants to break through laminated windows needs to be prepared to make a prolonged and noisy attack on the car. So far, though, it's only available as standard on the Lexus LS430. We think all manufacturers should offer it, at least as an option.

Other features There are plenty of other design aspects that a secure car can employ. All new cars have immobilisers, but not all have effective steering, ignition or transmission locks. Nor do many cars have particularly secure stereo systems – the best are made of detachable components, need a Pin code to operate or fit only one model of car.

HIGH SECURITY

The Lexus LS 430 is ahead of the pack for security

LATEST RESULTS

Our recent batch of security tests brings some exciting new entries, as well as some disappointing results from the latest MPVs

SUPERMINIS	Theft of	Theft from
Hyundai Getz 1.1	6	2
Mazda 2 1.4	8	3
Nissan Micra 1.2	7	3
Smart Cabrio Passion 0.6	6	1
Suzuki Alto 1.1	6	1

MEDIUM CARS	Theft of	Theft from
Renault Mégane 1.4	8	5

LARGE CARS	Theft of	Theft from
Honda Accord 2.0	7	3
Toyota Avensis 1.8	8	4

LUXURY CARS	Theft of	Theft from
Mercedes-Benz E 200 1.8	8	6

MPVs	Theft of	Theft from
Citroën Berlingo	6	2
Kia Carens 1.8	6	1
Mercedes-Benz Vaneo 1.6	6	2

OVERALL RESULTS

Here's how the scores stack up for the best- and worst-secured cars in each class

SUPERMINIS	Theft of	Theft from
Mini Cooper 1.6	6	5
Seat Arosa 1.0 3dr[1]	6	1
Smart Cabrio Passion 0.6	6	1
Suzuki Alto 1.1	6	1
Suzuki Ignis 1.3 3dr	6	1

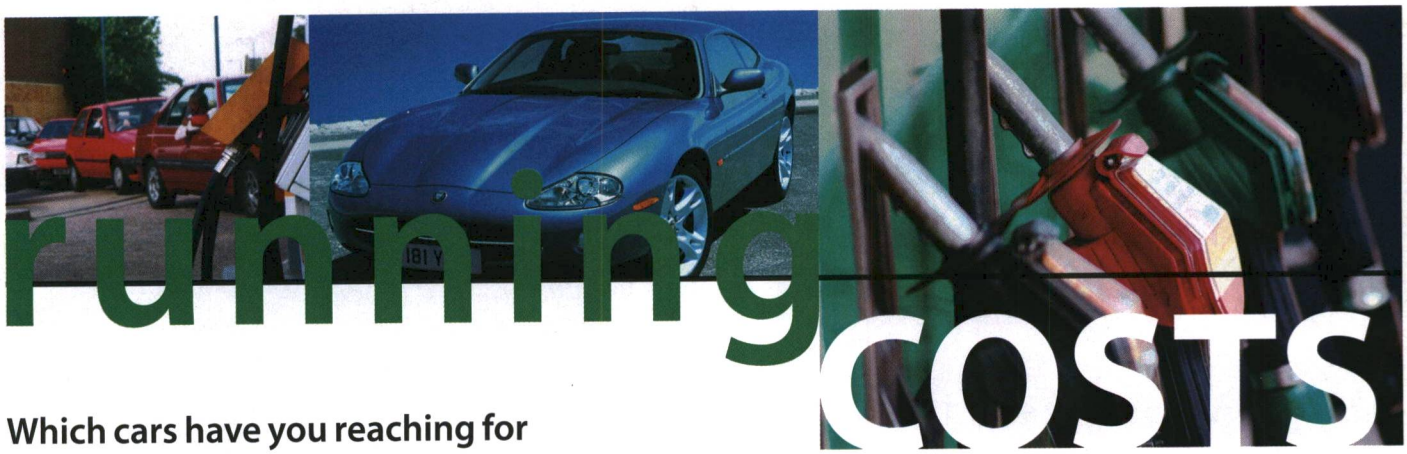
1 Since our tests, the locks have been improved. The 'theft of' score may increase by up to two points

MEDIUM CARS	Theft of	Theft from
Renault Mégane 1.4	8	5
Kia Rio 1.3	6	1
Suzuki Liana 1.6	6	1

LARGE CARS	Theft of	Theft from
BMW 318i 4dr	8	7
Fiat Marea 2.0 150 4dr	5	2

LUXURY CARS	Theft of	Theft from
Lexus LS430 4.3	9	8
Audi A6 2.8 Quattro 4 dr	8	4

MPVs	Theft of	Theft from
Peugeot 307 SW 1.6	7	5
Fiat Doblo 1.2	5	1
Hyundai Matrix 1.6	5	1



running COSTS

Which cars have you reaching for your wallet as often as your car keys? We name the worst offenders

There's no doubt that buying a new car is a big expense – often the largest single purchase after buying a home. But it's easy to underestimate the true cost of keeping a car on the road. Tax, insurance, servicing and fuel are fairly tangible expenses. However, less obvious costs, such as depreciation, have a large impact and can make a big difference between the overall cost of similarly priced cars.

We've compared the cost of running the 92 new models included in our survey. The results show an interesting rule of thumb – if, like the average driver, you expect to clock up around 12,000 miles per year, you should reckon on three years' running costs being roughly equivalent to the price of the car. So, for example, an Audi A4 2.0, which costs £18,695 on the road, would cost you roughly another £18,700 over three years. Nearly £11,000 of that would be depreciation, £3,700 of it fuel, and the rest mainly insurance, tax and maintenance.

But this rule of thumb shouldn't be taken too literally – there are still large differences between competing models, and savings to be had if you choose wisely. Check out our car summaries for a guide.

DEPRECIATION

It's often said that a car depreciates most quickly the moment you drive it out of the dealer's forecourt. And depreciation is usually the biggest single running cost for a car. With the exception of certain particularly sought-after used models, such as the Mercedes SLK, many cars will lose over half of their original value in the first three years.

For an example of how crippling depreciation can be, compare the Audi A6 2.4 Quattro with the Vauxhall Omega 2.6i V6 Elite. Both are luxury cars – the Vauxhall has an on-the-road price of around £25,000 and the Audi costs about £1,000 less. But, three years down the line, you could probably recoup around £9,100 for the Audi if you sold it privately, whereas the Vauxhall would probably fetch only about £4,800. The Vauxhall will have lost roughly 80 per cent of its value. You might be able to negotiate a lower initial price for the Vauxhall, but any discount will probably be swamped by the higher level of depreciation.

FUEL

How frequently you visit the pumps is the other big cost. And, again, differences can be substantial, especially if you clock up plenty of miles. Take the 1.4-litre Honda Jazz, which returns around 50 miles per gallon. A Rover 25 with equivalent-sized engine covers just 41mpg – so, over 12,000 miles, the Jazz will save you around £170 in petrol, at today's prices.

OTHER COSTS

The other costs involved in owning a car are mainly tax, insurance, servicing and maintenance, and finance costs. For more information on cutting your insurance costs, see *Which?*, September 2003, p18.

RUNNING COSTS BREAKDOWN

The model summaries, which start on p21, show running costs for a typical variant of each new model featured in *Which? Car 2003/2004*. They give our ratings for depreciation and annual fuel consumption, as well as the overall cost of running the car.

Our calculations are for a car kept for three years, covering 12,000 miles per year. Each car is given a rating from 'very low' to 'very high' within each class. So you can compare one supermini with other superminis, for example, but not with medium-sized cars. Our ratings include the following factors.

- **Fuel consumption**
  We've used the official 'combined' figures, which are weighted for typical urban and non-urban driving habits. Fuel prices come from the AA's monthly analysis.
- **Annual road tax**
  We have based these costs on the government's banding system, which uses official CO_2 emissions data.
- **Insurance**
  We've used typical quotes from an insurance database to calculate the insurance costs for each model.
- **Depreciation**
  This is based on our experts' predictions of the resale values the cars will have three years after purchase.
- **Service, maintenance and repair**
  This takes account of the length of new car warranties and the manufacturer-specific labour rate.
- **Finance costs**
  Finally, to work out the finance costs, we used a cash-flow calculation and included loss of interest on the amount of equity you'd have tied up.

OVERALL RESULTS

SUPERMINIS

Cheapest
Daewoo Matiz
Ford Ka
Smart car
Most expensive
Ford Fiesta
Toyota Yaris Verso

MEDIUM CARS

Cheapest
Hyundai Accent
Most expensive
Chrysler PT Cruiser
Subaru Impreza

LARGE CARS

Cheapest
Mitsubishi Carisma
Skoda Octavia
Volvo S40
Most expensive
Mercedes-Benz C-Class

LUXURY CARS

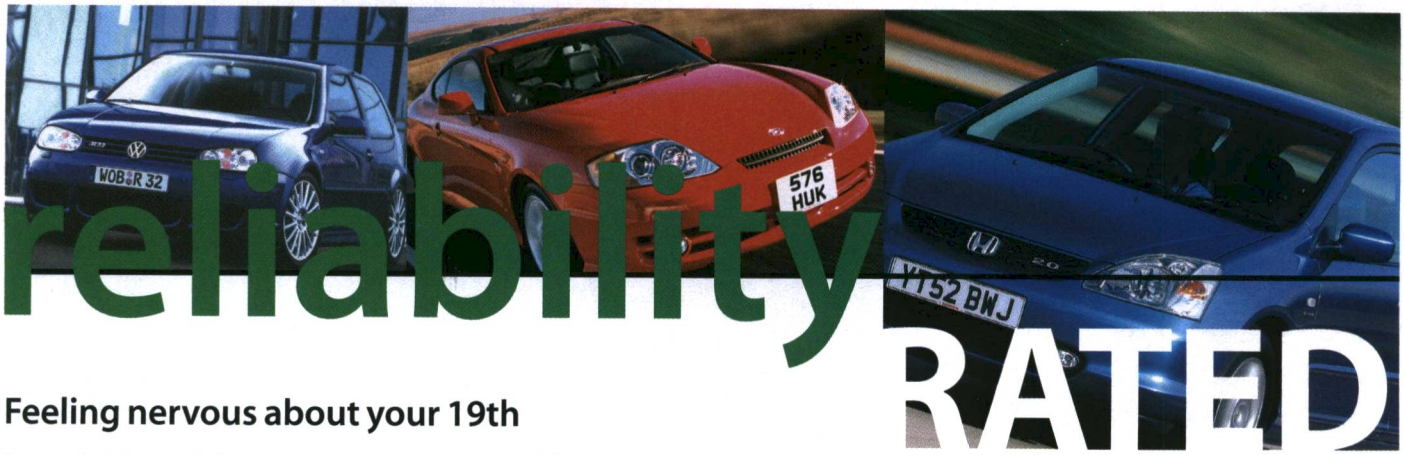
Cheapest
Audi A6
Most expensive
Lexus GS300

MPVs

Cheapest
Citroën Xsara Picasso
Fiat Multipla
Renault Scénic
Most expensive
Chrysler Voyager

OFF ROAD

Cheapest
Honda HR-V
Most expensive
BMW X5
Jeep Grand Cherokee



reliability RATED

Feeling nervous about your 19th breakdown? Our annual survey will help you choose a more reliable car

Reliability is one of the most important considerations when choosing a car. So car makers should listen up, as this year's survey brings bad news for companies including Audi, Mercedes-Benz and VW – brands which people have traditionally regarded as highly dependable. The familiar Japanese marques, however, continue to occupy pole position, with their excellent reliability records still intact.

OUR UNIQUE SURVEY

Every year, we send out detailed questionnaires to find out real-life owners' verdicts on all aspects of their cars. This allows us to track trends in brand and model reliability, as well as report back on the strengths and weaknesses of specific models.

In January, our survey dropped through the letter boxes of 80,000 randomly selected *Which?* readers and, as ever, many of you were happy to share experiences of your cars. In fact, the survey provided us with useful information on 32,926 cars up to eight years old. This massive number of responses means that our statistical analyses are highly dependable. Thanks to all of you who took part.

RELIABILITY RATED

To assess manufacturer reliability, we asked what had happened to your car in the previous year. The questions cover three main aspects of reliability. These are shown in detail for models featured in the summaries, which start on p21.

Breakdowns account for whether the car broke down or failed to start. We've excluded accidents, punctures, flat batteries which resulted from the lights being left on, and cars running out of fuel.

Faults indicates parts that have needed repair or replacement. We've excluded routinely replaced parts, such as spark plugs, and parts replaced as a result of an accident or through misuse.

Problems are things which are annoying or inconvenient but which don't put the car out of action – for example, squeaks and rattles or loose trim.

WHO'S BETTER, WHO'S BEST?

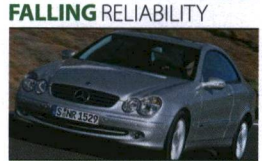
The overall reliability ratings, right, show how the manufacturers compare. Because breakdowns create the most inconvenience for people, they account for half of the overall rating. Faults and problems contribute 25 per cent each to the rating. We've graded each of the manufacturers into best, good, average or poor, depending on how much their reliability record differs from the overall average for cars up to eight years old.

This year's reliability findings make for interesting reading. Mercedes-Benz is the biggest mover, dropping two classes from best to average this year. It's the newest cars (2001 onwards) that are letting drivers down – Mercedes' standards appear to be slipping.

Volvo and VW should be particularly concerned by their slide into the poor category. It's just as well everything in life isn't as reliable as a VW, because the cars it produced between 1998 and 2003 are below average for breakdowns, and older ones only average. VW's sister brands (Audi, Seat and Skoda) all rate higher than it does for reliability, though they're far from excellent themselves. VW seems to have lost focus on its core ranges while trying to attract different customers with its new higher-priced models.

Volvo is average for breakdowns for cars built since 1995, and there has been a slight reduction in its level of new car breakdowns since last year. However, a high level of faulty parts and annoying problems has dragged it into the poor category.

FALLING RELIABILITY



Mercedes-Benz has slipped down two categories – from 'best' to 'average'

OVERALL RESULTS

This is how the manufacturers rate overall, taking account of reported breakdowns, faults and problems. Makers are listed within groups, with the survey sample sizes in brackets

BEST		AVERAGE		POOR	
Honda	(1,707)	Audi ▼	(911)	Alfa Romeo	(199)
Hyundai ▲	(227)	BMW	(1,412)	Citroën	(1,175)
Lexus	(191)	Chrysler	(149)	Fiat	(707)
Mazda	(599)	Daewoo	(287)	Land Rover	(490)
Nissan ▲	(1,719)	Isuzu	(45)	MG ●	(136)
Smart ●	(51)	Jaguar ▼	(344)	Peugeot	(2,069)
Toyota	(2,105)	Jeep ▲	(102)	Renault	(2,174)
		Kia	(95)	Rover	(1,425)
GOOD		Mercedes-Benz ▼▼	(1,126)	Vauxhall	(2,949)
Daihatsu ▲	(75)	Mitsubishi	(320)	Volvo ▼	(1,000)
Ford ▲	(4,173)	Porsche ●	(38)	VW ▼	(2,677)
Suzuki ▼	(192)	Proton	(78)		
		Saab	(445)		
		Seat ▼	(387)		
		Skoda	(528)		
		Subaru ▼	(292)		

KEY

▲ Moved up one class since 2002
▼ Dropped one class since 2002
▼▼ Dropped two classes since 2002
● New entry this year

dealers RATED

Some dealers will roll out the red carpet when you're buying a new car. But are they still helpful when it needs servicing?

When you walk into a showroom with several thousand pounds to spend on a new motor, you're entitled to expect excellent customer service. And our *Which? Car* survey shows some dealers are consistently good when it comes to making buyers feel valued. Unfortunately, others still think a lukewarm cup of tea and some routine sales patter will do the trick.

But even if you do find a showroom with helpful sales service, beware that customer care for servicing and repairs doesn't always match up to it – our league tables, right, show that after-sales care can fall short of the sales service.

THIS YEAR'S WINNERS...

It's no surprise to see Lexus, Jaguar and BMW leading the pack again, and this year they're joined at the top by Porsche.

Porsche, Lexus and Jaguar also score highly when it comes to servicing. Kia and Saab have both shown significant improvements in this area. In fact, Kia has registered a 54 per cent improvement – an impressive achievement, after ranking average a year ago.

...AND LOSERS

There are a few serial offenders at the foot of the tables who would do well to follow Kia's example. Alfa Romeo and Fiat have been consistently rated as poor over the last few years for both sales and servicing. This year, only 30 per cent of Alfa Romeo customers are very satisfied with the quality of servicing and repairs. VW is also a familiar name when it comes to poor customer care, and Jeep has slipped yet further down the table.

In general, many of the least reliable brands also offer the worst customer care for servicing and repairs, while the most reliable brands tend to score above average for dealer satisfaction. So, for hassle-free motoring, it really does pay to choose your new car carefully.

HOW OWNERS RATE THEIR DEALERS

These league tables show the percentage of people who said they were very satisfied with their dealer.

BUYING A CAR

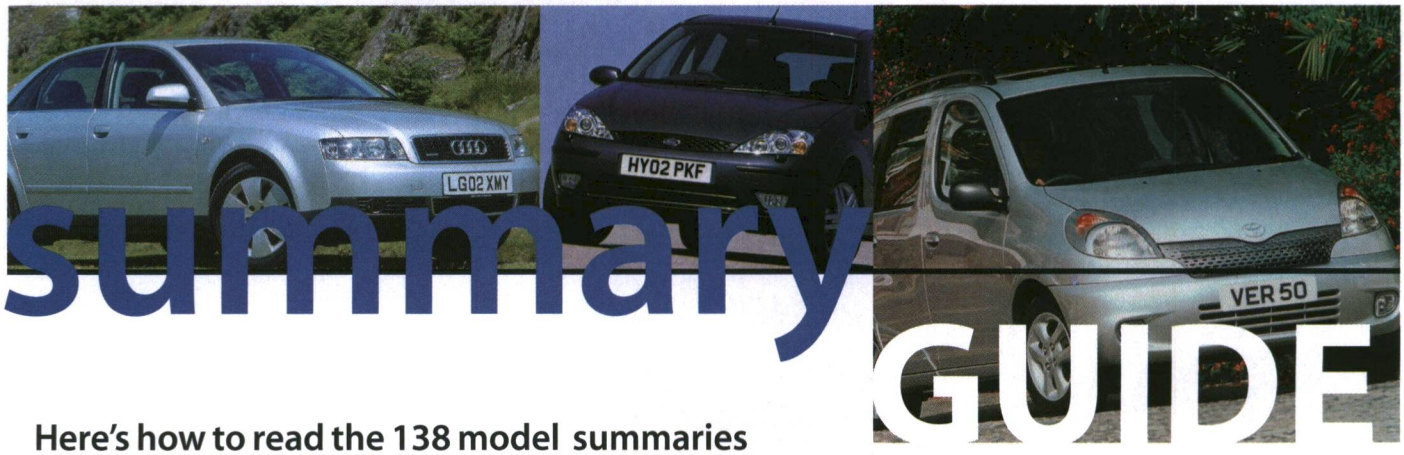
		Sample size
Lexus	79%	136
Jaguar	78%	242
Porsche	75%	32
BMW	72%	863
Saab	69%	291
Toyota	68%	1,577
Skoda	66%	462
Daihatsu	65%	46
Subaru	65%	223
Honda	64%	1,337
Kia	64%	76
Hyundai	63%	175
Mazda	63%	434
Suzuki	62%	159
Volvo	62%	669
Mercedes-Benz	61%	767
Mitsubishi	60%	231
Audi	59%	524
Chrysler	58%	98
Proton	58%	52
Seat	58%	300
Smart	58%	40
Nissan	55%	1,280
Land Rover	54%	325
Citroën	53%	825
Daewoo	53%	215
Peugeot	53%	1,379
Vauxhall	52%	1,728
Rover	51%	898
Ford	49%	2,409
MG	49%	101
VW	49%	1,765
Jeep	48%	60
Renault	48%	1,387
Alfa Romeo	44%	117
Fiat	38%	443

Average 56% — Total: 21,709 — Sample size

SERVICING AND REPAIRS

		Sample size
Porsche	75%	32
Lexus	73%	156
Kia	71%	62
Jaguar	68%	281
Daihatsu	67%	39
Hyundai	65%	161
Saab	65%	370
BMW	64%	1,154
Honda	64%	1,215
Toyota	64%	1,518
Smart	63%	30
Subaru	63%	225
Mazda	61%	405
Skoda	61%	403
Daewoo	60%	183
Suzuki	60%	126
Nissan	59%	1,045
Mitsubishi	57%	222
Proton	57%	42
Volvo	56%	758
Rover	53%	705
Audi	51%	688
Mercedes-Benz	51%	944
Seat	50%	274
Citroën	47%	761
Peugeot	47%	1,358
Ford	45%	2,442
Renault	45%	1,297
Vauxhall	45%	1,859
Chrysler	44%	115
Land Rover	44%	372
MG	44%	95
VW	42%	1,960
Fiat	37%	368
Jeep	32%	71
Alfa Romeo	30%	149

Average 52% — Total: 22,609 — Sample size



summary GUIDE

Here's how to read the 138 model summaries in this year's guide, which start opposite

This year we've packed even more information into the model summaries, to arm you with independent advice when buying a new or used car.

First, we give basic details for each model: what you can expect to pay, the body styles, engine options and dimensions. Second, there are the results of our own extensive testing and analysis. This includes data on running costs, safety and security.

The remaining information comes from our massive survey of *Which?* members' real-life experiences with their cars. We sent questionnaires to 80,000 readers and received replies on 32,926 cars up to eight years old. This allows us to give ratings on day-to-day aspects of using the car, including ride quality and noise. It also means that we can report on the reliability of specific models.

CAR CLASS

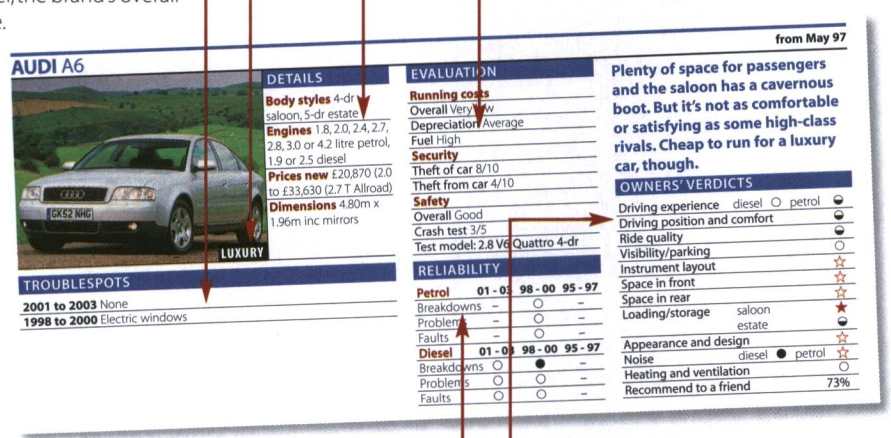
We group each model into one of seven classes: supermini, medium car/small MPV, large car, luxury car, off road, MPV and sports/coupé.

TROUBLESPOTS

These show the things that owners say are the particular problems with the cars. Look out for them if you're buying used. If we have too few questionnaire replies to give information on a model, the brand's overall reliability is stated here.

DETAILS

Body styles shows the number of doors and, for example, whether the car is available as a hatchback, saloon or estate.
Engines tells you which petrol, diesel and dual-fuel engines are available.
Prices gives list prices for current models and a rough guide for used-only models.
Dimensions gives the length and width (including mirrors, where stated) for the smallest car in the range.


from May 97
AUDI A6
GK52 NHG
LUXURY
DETAILS
Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate
Engines 1.8, 2.0, 2.4, 2.7, 2.8, 3.0 or 4.2 litre petrol, 1.9 or 2.5 diesel
Prices new £20,870 (2.0 to £33,630 (2.7 T Allroad)
Dimensions 4.80m x 1.96m inc mirrors
EVALUATION
Running costs
Overall Very low
Depreciation Average
Fuel High
Security
Theft of car 8/10
Theft from car 4/10
Safety
Overall Good
Crash test 3/5
Test model: 2.8 V6 Quattro 4-dr
Plenty of space for passengers and the saloon has a cavernous boot. But it's not as comfortable or satisfying as some high-class rivals. Cheap to run for a luxury car, though.
OWNERS' VERDICTS
Driving experience diesel ○ petrol ◒
Driving position and comfort ◒
Ride quality ◒
Visibility/parking ○
Instrument layout ☆
Space in front ☆
Space in rear ☆
Loading/storage saloon ★ estate ◒
Appearance and design ☆
Noise diesel ● petrol ☆
Heating and ventilation ○
Recommend to a friend 73%
RELIABILITY
Petrol 01 - 03 98 - 00 95 - 97
Breakdowns – ○ –
Problems – ○ –
Faults – ○ –
Diesel 01 - 03 98 - 00 95 - 97
Breakdowns ○ ● –
Problems ○ ○ –
Faults ○ ○ –
TROUBLESPOTS
2001 to 2003 None
1998 to 2000 Electric windows

EVALUATION

Running costs Overall shows how expensive it is to run a mid-range version of that car, compared with similar models in its class. Depreciation is based on predicted resale value after three years. Fuel costs are compared with similar models in the class. These ratings are for new cars only.
Security These scores indicate how hard the car is to steal and to steal items from. They are comparable across car classes.
Safety Overall ratings are based on our own system. We also show the Euro NCAP crash test result for occupant safety. The overall rating is comparable across classes but the Euro NCAP score isn't.
Test model shows the model used for the safety and security tests.

RELIABILITY

The reliability ratings come from our survey of members. For each car, we give three ratings for three different age groups.
Breakdowns shows how often it broke down or failed to start.
Problems shows any annoying hiccups which don't put the car out of action, such as rattles.
Faults shows how often parts needed repair or replacement.

A ★ rating means the car is better than average for that age group; ○ means that it's average; and ● that it's less reliable than average.

A – means that either the car wasn't built at that time, or there were too few models of this age in our survey to enable us to rate it. These ratings are comparable across classes.

OWNERS' VERDICTS

We asked car owners to rate more than 50 aspects of their car, which we analysed to form 11 key ratings. We compared each car only with others in the same class. So, for example, you can't compare the space in the rear scores for an MPV and a supermini.

Recommend to a friend shows the percentage of owners who would definitely recommend the car to a friend.

KEY

best
★
☆
○
◒
●
worst

OUR CHOICES

Our **Best Buys** are the cars we regard as the finest new cars currently in showrooms

These are cars with one or two drawbacks, or for which we don't have enough information to make Best Buys

ALFA ROMEO 147

from Feb 01

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback
Engines 1.6, 2.0 or 3.2 litre petrol, 1.9 litre diesel
Prices new £13,320 (1.6 T Spark Turismo 3-dr) to £22,270 (3.2 GTA)
Dimensions 4.17m x 1.73m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall High
Depreciation Average
Fuel Very high
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 3/5
Test model: 1.6 T Spark 3-dr

Alfa's hatchback majors on looks and driving pleasure rather than practicality. Safety is only average, and it's lacking the build quality you'd expect at this price.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Non-engine electrics, airbags, paintwork chipped/lifted/peeled/blistered

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	–	–
Problems	●	–	–
Faults	○	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	★
Driving position and comfort	★
Ride quality	☆
Visibility/parking	●
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	◒
Loading/storage	●
Appearance and design	★
Noise	○
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	71%

ALFA ROMEO 156

from Jan 98

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate
Engines 1.6, 1.7, 2.0, 2.5 or 3.2 litre petrol, 1.9 or 2.4 litre diesel
Prices new £14,570 (1.6 T Spark Turismo) to £28,000 (3.2 GTA Estate)
Dimensions 4.43m x 1.90m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall High
Depreciation Average
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 4/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test n/a
Test model: 2.0 T Spark 4-dr

The recently restyled 156 is a rewarding drive, but limited space and reliability problems hamper the overall experience.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Audio equipment, gears/clutch, suspension components
1998 to 2000 Some non-engine electrics, suspension components

RELIABILITY

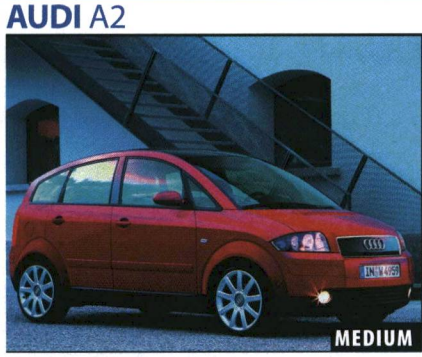
Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	○	–
Problems	●	●	–
Faults	●	○	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	◒
Instrument layout	○
Space in front	○
Space in rear	●
Loading/storage	●
Appearance and design	★
Noise	◒
Heating and ventilation	◒
Recommend to a friend	57%

AUDI A2

from Aug 00



DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr hatchback
Engines 1.4 or 1.6 litre petrol, 1.4 litre diesel
Prices new £13,280 (1.4) to £15,300 (1.4 TDI Sport)
Dimensions 3.83m x 1.87m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Very low
Fuel Very low
Security
Theft of car 8/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 1.4

The A2's a better drive than the Mercedes A-class, but it's let down by poor ride quality and paltry boot space. An aluminium body means it's frugal on fuel.

TROUBLESPOTS

There were too few questionnaire replies to give specific reliability information for this model. Overall, Audi is average for reliability.

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	–	–
Problems	–	–	–
Faults	–	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	●
Visibility/parking	●
Instrument layout	★
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	★
Loading/storage	●
Appearance and design	★
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	★
Recommend to a friend	67%

AUDI A3 (USED ONLY)

from Sep 96 to May 03

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback
Engines 1.6 or 1.8 litre petrol, 1.9 litre diesel
Prices used around £5,900 to £18,900
Dimensions 4.16m x 1.86m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 4/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 1.6i 3-dr

Recently replaced by the new A3, but still a good all-rounder. Drivers praise build quality but criticise room in the back, and the cost of servicing and parts.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Gears/clutch
1998 to 2000 Electric windows

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	○	–
Problems	○	●	–
Faults	○	○	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience			☆
Driving position and comfort			☆
Ride quality			☆
Visibility/parking			☆
Instrument layout			○
Space in front			☆
Space in rear			●
Loading/storage			◒
Appearance and design			★
Noise	diesel	☆ petrol	★
Heating and ventilation			☆
Recommend to a friend			72%

AUDI A4

from Dec 00

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate, 2-dr cabriolet
Engines 1.6, 1.8, 2.0, 2.4 or 3.0 litre petrol, 1.9 or 2.5 litre diesel
Prices new £17,960 (1.6) to £29,990 (3.0 Quattro Sport Cabrio)
Dimensions 4.48m x 1.95m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Low
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car 8/10
Theft from car 4/10
Safety
Overall Good
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 2.0 SE 4-dr

The A4's build quality and performance are impressive, and safety is good too. However, all models lack rear legroom and estate capacity is poor for its size.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Some engine electrics (petrol), lights/light units

RELIABILITY

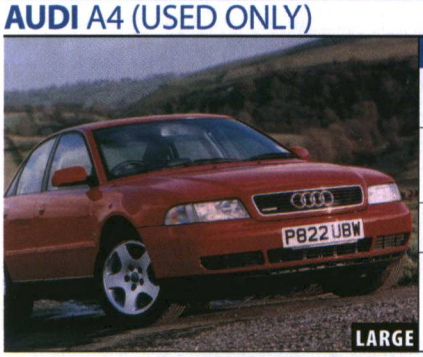
Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	–	–
Problems	○	–	–
Faults	○	–	–
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	○	–	–
Problems	○	–	–
Faults	○	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel	★ petrol	☆
Driving position and comfort			○
Ride quality			○
Visibility/parking	saloon		○
	estate		☆
Instrument layout			☆
Space in front			☆
Space in rear			●
Loading/storage	saloon		☆
	estate		●
Appearance and design			★
Noise	diesel	○ petrol	★
Heating and ventilation			☆
Recommend to a friend			80%

AUDI A4 (USED ONLY)

Mar 95 to Jun 01



DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate
Engines 1.6, 1.8, 2.4, 2.6 or 2.8 litre petrol, 1.9 or 2.5 litre diesel
Prices used around £3,500 to £23,800
Dimensions 4.48m x 1.85m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 4/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 2.5/5
Test model: 2.8 V6 Quattro 4-dr

Shares many of the strengths and flaws of the newer A4, but beware of high servicing costs. It's a reasonable used buy.

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 Cam belt/timing belt (diesel)
1995 to 1997 Alarm/immobiliser (diesel), air conditioning, steering components, suspension components

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	○	○
Problems	–	★	○
Faults	–	○	○
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	–	★	○
Problems	–	○	○
Faults	–	○	●

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel	★ petrol	☆
Driving position and comfort			◒
Ride quality	diesel	☆ petrol	○
Visibility/parking	saloon		○
	estate		☆
Instrument layout			☆
Space in front			☆
Space in rear			●
Loading/storage	saloon		○
	estate		●
Appearance and design			☆
Noise			☆
Heating and ventilation			○
Recommend to a friend			69%

AUDI A6

from May 97

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate
Engines 1.8, 2.0, 2.4, 2.7, 2.8, 3.0 or 4.2 litre petrol, 1.9 or 2.5 diesel
Prices new £20,870 (2.0 to £33,630 (2.7 T Allroad)
Dimensions 4.80m x 1.96m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Very low
Depreciation Average
Fuel High
Security
Theft of car 8/10
Theft from car 4/10
Safety
Overall Good
Crash test 3/5
Test model: 2.8 V6 Quattro 4-dr

Plenty of space for passengers and the saloon has a cavernous boot. But it's not as comfortable or satisfying as some high-class rivals. Cheap to run for a luxury car, though.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None
1998 to 2000 Electric windows

RELIABILITY

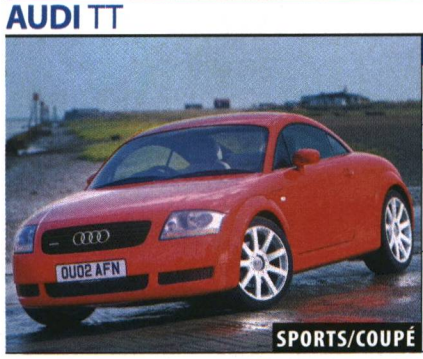
Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	○	–
Problems	–	○	–
Faults	–	○	–
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	○	●	–
Problems	○	○	–
Faults	○	○	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel ○ petrol		◒
Driving position and comfort			◒
Ride quality			◒
Visibility/parking			○
Instrument layout			☆
Space in front			☆
Space in rear			☆
Loading/storage	saloon		★
	estate		◒
Appearance and design			☆
Noise	diesel ● petrol		☆
Heating and ventilation			○
Recommend to a friend			73%

AUDI TT

from Feb 99



DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr coupé, 2-dr convertible
Engines 1.8 litre petrol
Prices new £21,270 (1.8T convertible) to £29,570 (1.8T 225bhp convertible)
Dimensions 4.04m x 1.86m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall High
Depreciation High
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test 4/5

People love the TT's high-concept design, inside and out – so much so that they're prepared to forgive the terrible reliability record and high running costs.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Fuel system, ignition system

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	●	–	–
Problems	●	–	–
Faults	●	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	○
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	☆
Space in rear (coupé only)	◒
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	★
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	88%

BMW 3 SERIES

from Sep 98

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate, 2-dr coupé/convertible, 3-dr hatch
Engines 1.8, 1.9, 2.0, 2.2, 2.5, 2.8 or 3.0 litre petrol, 1.7, 2.0 or 3.0 diesel
Prices new £16,370 (316ti Compact) to £33,170 (330Ci conv.)
Dimensions 4.48m x 1.95m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Low
Fuel Very low
Security
Theft of car 8/10
Theft from car 7/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 318i SE 4-dr

The Best Buy 3 series offers an attractive all-round package. It's a driver's car, with good safety and security. It's not big on space, though, and spare parts' prices are steep.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Alarm/immobiliser (petrol), lights/light units
1998 to 2000 Cooling system (petrol), some heating/ventilation components

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	★	–
Problems	○	○	–
Faults	○	★	–
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	○	–	–
Problems	○	–	–
Faults	○	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel ★ petrol		☆
Driving position and comfort			○
Ride quality	diesel ○ petrol		☆
Visibility/parking	saloon		★
	estate		○
Instrument layout			☆
Space in front			○
Space in rear			●
Loading/storage			●
Appearance and design			★
Noise			★
Heating and ventilation			☆
Recommend to a friend			81%

BMW 3 SERIES (USED ONLY)

Apr 91 to Aug 98

DETAILS

Body styles 2-dr coupé/convertible, 3-dr hatch, 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate
Engines 1.6, 1.8, 1.9, 2.0, 2.5 or 2.8 litre petrol, 1.7 or 2.5 litre diesel
Prices used up to around £18,100
Dimensions 4.50m x 1.71m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test 1.5/5
Test model: 318i auto 4-dr

Like the newer 3 series, older versions major on drive quality and suffer from stingy space in the back and boot, as well as high servicing costs. Look out for the troublespots on this car.

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 Cylinder head/cylinder head gasket, central locking, air conditioning, steering components, suspension components
1995 to 1997 Alarm/immobiliser, central locking, suspension components

RELIABILITY

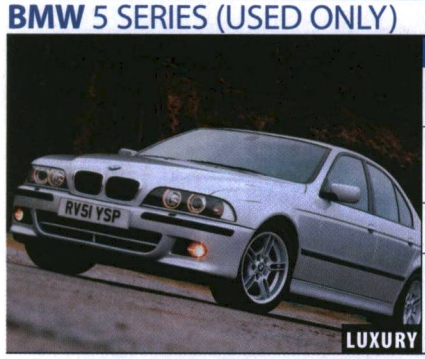
Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	○	○
Problems	–	●	○
Faults	–	●	○

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	★
Driving position and comfort	○
Ride quality	☆
Visibility/parking	★
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	○
Space in rear	●
Loading/storage	●
Appearance and design	☆
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	○
Recommend to a friend	72%

BMW 5 SERIES (USED ONLY)

Apr 96 to Jun 03[1]



DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate
Engines 2.0, 2.2, 2.5, 2.8, 3.0, 3.5 or 4.4 litre petrol, 2.5 or 2.9 litre diesel
Prices used up to around £33,800
Dimensions 4.78m x 1.99m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Low
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car 8/10
Theft from car 6/10
Safety
Overall Good
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 520i SE 4-dr

The much-loved 5 series has just been replaced, and it's a hard act to follow. There are reservations about space, though, and older models have a few troublespots.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None
1998 to 2000 Cooling system (petrol), some non-engine electrics, air conditioning, braking system components, airbags
1995 to 1997 Some non-engine electrics, airbags

1 Touring estate model in production until early 2004, priced from £25,210 to £42,320

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	○	○
Problems	○	○	●
Faults	○	●	○
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	○	–	–
Problems	○	–	–
Faults	○	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience			★
Driving position and comfort			◒
Ride quality			☆
Visibility/parking	saloon		☆
	estate		★
Instrument layout			☆
Space in front			○
Space in rear			●
Loading/storage	saloon		◒
	estate		●
Appearance and design			☆
Noise	diesel	☆	petrol ★
Heating and ventilation			◒
Recommend to a friend			87%

BMW 7 SERIES (USED ONLY)

Aug 94 to Feb 02

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon
Engines 2.8, 3.0, 3.5, 4.0, 4.4, 5.0 or 5.4 litre petrol
Prices used around £7,700 to £48,300
Dimensions 4.99m x 1.87m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test n/a

BMW's ultimate luxury car was replaced last year, but hasn't sold in large numbers. The older 7 is hard to fault, though late-90s' models are prone to breakdowns.

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 None

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	●	–
Problems	–	○	–
Faults	–	○	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	☆
Visibility/parking	★
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	○
Space in rear	☆
Loading/storage	○
Appearance and design	☆
Noise	★
Heating and ventilation	○
Recommend to a friend	83%

BMW X5

from Mar 00

DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr estate
Engines 3.0, 4.4 or 4.6 litre petrol, 2.9 litre diesel
Prices new £32,960 (3.0i and 3.0d) to £53,820 (4.6is)
Dimensions 4.67m x 1.88m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Very high
Depreciation Average
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test 5/5

Owners love the X5 for many reasons, though we suspect its off-road abilities aren't among them. Evidently luxurious, but the insurance costs are painful.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Some heating/ventilation components

RELIABILITY

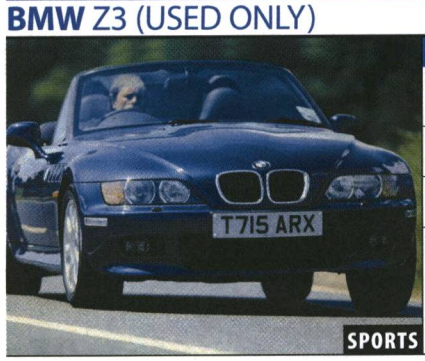
Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	–	–
Problems	○	–	–
Faults	○	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	○
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	○
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	○
Space in rear	☆
Loading/storage	◒
Appearance and design	☆
Noise	★
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	92%

BMW Z3 (USED ONLY)

Jan 97 to Jul 02



DETAILS

Body styles 2-dr coupé, 2-dr convertible
Engines 1.9, 2.0, 2.2, 2.8, 3.0 or 3.2 litre petrol
Prices used up to around £32,300
Dimensions 4.03m x 1.76m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test n/a

Although not a bad car, the Z3 is nowhere near as well liked as the Audi TT, Mazda MX-5 or Mercedes SLK. It's been replaced by the Z4.

TROUBLESPOTS

There were too few questionnaire replies to give specific reliability information for this model. Overall, BMW is average for reliability.

RELIABILITY

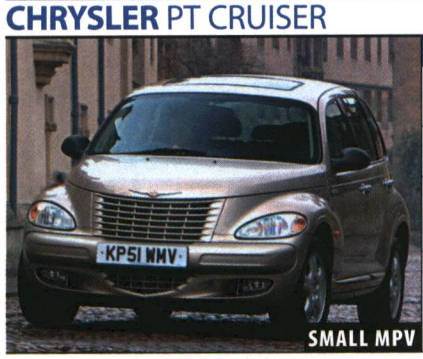
Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	–	–
Problems	–	–	–
Faults	–	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	◒
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	○
Space in rear	–
Loading/storage	●
Appearance and design	☆
Noise	○
Heating and ventilation	◒
Recommend to a friend	69%

CHRYSLER PT CRUISER

from Jul 00



DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr hatchback
Engines 2.0 litre petrol, 2.1 litre diesel
Prices new £12,810 (2.0 Classic) to £17,020 (2.2 CRD Limited)
Dimensions 4.29m x 1.71m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Very high
Depreciation Average
Fuel Very high
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 4/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 3/5
Test model: Touring Edition

Love-it-or-hate-it retro looks and flexible interior space are the main selling points for the PT Cruiser. Safety is not as good as some of its competitors, and the outré styling hampers visibility.

TROUBLESPOTS

There were too few questionnaire replies to give specific reliability information for this model. Overall, Chrysler is average for reliability.

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	–	–
Problems	–	–	–
Faults	–	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	◒
Driving position and comfort	★
Ride quality	◒
Visibility/parking	●
Instrument layout	◒
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	★
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	★
Noise	◒
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	73%

CHRYSLER VOYAGER/GRAND VOYAGER

from Feb 01

DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr MPV with 7 seats
Engines 2.4 or 3.3 litre petrol, 2.5 litre diesel
Prices new £18,310 (Voyager 2.4SE) to £31,815 (Grand Voyager 3.3 Limited XS)
Dimensions 4.81m x 2.00m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Very high
Depreciation Average
Fuel Very high
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 4/10
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test n/a
Test model: 2.5 diesel LX

Particularly spacious in the back, even for an MPV, and comfortable for both driver and passengers. But it's disappointing to drive, and running costs are steep.

TROUBLESPOTS

There were too few questionnaire replies to give specific reliability information for this model. Overall, Chrysler is average for reliability

RELIABILITY

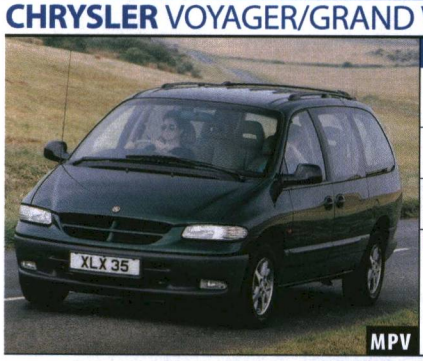
Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	–	–
Problems	–	–	–
Faults	–	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	◒
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	☆
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	◒
Space in front	◒
Space in rear	★
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	★
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	72%

CHRYSLER VOYAGER/GRAND VOYAGER (USED ONLY)

Mar 97 to Feb 01



DETAILS

Body styles MPV with 5 or 7 seats
Engines 2.0 or 3.3 litre petrol, 2.5 litre diesel
Prices used around £7,500 to £16,000
Dimensions 4.74m x 1.94m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test 2/5

The old Voyager was severely criticised by Euro NCAP in 1999 for its abysmal performance in the frontal crash test. And there's little else to redeem it, so look elsewhere for a used MPV.

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 Cooling system, some non-engine electrics, air conditioning, braking system components

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	○	–
Problems	–	●	–
Faults	–	●	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	◒
Driving position and comfort	○
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	◒
Space in front	◒
Space in rear	☆
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	☆
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	○
Recommend to a friend	49%

CITROËN C3

from Jan 02

DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr hatchback, 2-dr cabriolet (Pluriel)
Engines 1.1, 1.4 or 1.6 litre petrol, 1.4 litre diesel
Prices new £8,370 (1.1) to £13,445 (1.6 Pluriel)
Dimensions 3.85m x 1.67m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Average
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car 8/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 1.4i LX

This spacious supermini is a much better bet than the ageing Saxo, particularly in terms of road manners, comfort and safety. Citroën's reliability record really needs to improve, though.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Interior equipment

RELIABILITY

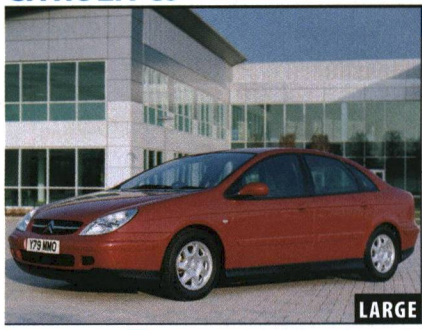
Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	–	–
Problems	○	–	–
Faults	○	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	◒
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	★
Loading/storage	○
Appearance and design	○
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	70%

CITROËN C5

from Apr 01



DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr hatchback, 5-dr estate
Engines 1.8, 2.0 or 3.0 litre petrol, 2.0 or 2.2 litre diesel
Prices new £14,530 (1.8i LX) to £23,315 (3.0i Exclusive estate)
Dimensions 4.62m x 2.10m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation High
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car 8/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 1.8 LX 5-dr

Little more than two years since it was launched, and already the C5 is riddled with faulty parts and annoying problems.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Engine electrics (petrol), dashboard switches/control stalks, automatic transmission, braking system components, steering components, suspension components

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	–	–
Problems	●	–	–
Faults	●	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel ☆	petrol	◒
Driving position and comfort			○
Ride quality			○
Visibility/parking	hatchback		○
	estate		●
Instrument layout			☆
Space in front			☆
Space in rear			★
Loading/storage			★
Appearance and design			○
Noise	diesel ★	petrol	☆
Heating and ventilation			○
Recommend to a friend			57%

CITROËN SAXO

from May 96

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback
Engines 1.1, 1.4 or 1.6 litre petrol, 1.5 litre diesel
Prices new £6,670 (1.1i Forte) to £11,815 (1.6i VTS)
Dimensions 3.74m x 1.91m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Low
Depreciation High
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 2/10
Safety
Overall Poor
Crash test 2/5
Test model: 1.1i SX 5-dr

Saxo has had its day, and needs to be pensioned off to avoid further embarrassment from latest generation of superior superminis. Don't be tempted by heavy discounts.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	–	–
Problems	○	–	–
Faults	○	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	◒
Driving position and comfort	◒
Ride quality	◒
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	◒
Space in front	◒
Space in rear	◒
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	○
Noise	○
Heating and ventilation	◒
Recommend to a friend	34%

CITROËN SYNERGIE (USED ONLY)

Oct 95 to Sep 02

DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr MPV with 6 or 7 seats
Engines 2.0 litre petrol, 1.9 or 2.0 litre diesel
Prices used around £4,000 to £12,700
Dimensions 4.46m x 1.82m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test n/a

The Synergie and its sister cars, the Fiat Ulysse and Peugeot 806, are no lookers, and otherwise pretty average. A new range of MPVs has superseded all three models over the last year.

TROUBLESPOTS

There were too few questionnaire replies to give specific reliability information for this model. Overall, Citroën is poor for reliability.

Owners' verdicts are the same for the Fiat Ulysse and Peugeot 806, which are similar to the Citroën Synergie.

RELIABILITY

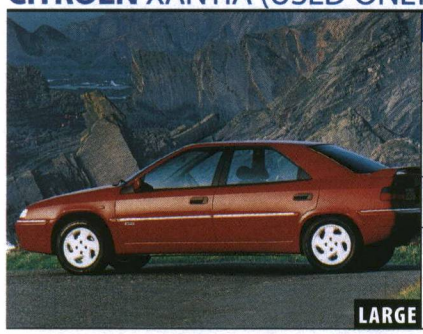
Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	–	–
Problems	–	–	–
Faults	–	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	○
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	○
Space in front	◒
Space in rear	○
Loading/storage	○
Appearance and design	●
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	○
Recommend to a friend	55%

CITROËN XANTIA (USED ONLY)

May 93 to Oct 00



DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr hatchback, 5-dr estate
Engines 1.6, 1.8, 2.0 or 3.0 litre petrol, 1.9, 2.0 or 2.1 litre diesel
Prices used up to around £7,500
Dimensions 4.44m x 1.76m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 1.5/5
Test model: 1.8i LX 5-dr

The Xantia won't go down in history as a Citroën classic, and it has far too many bad habits to be anything like a good buy.

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 Exhaust or emission control system (diesel), braking system components
1995 to 1997 Fuel system (diesel), battery (diesel), cam belt/timing belt (diesel), clutch, braking system components, suspension components

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	–	○
Problems	–	–	●
Faults	–	–	○
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	–	○	○
Problems	–	○	●
Faults	–	●	●

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience		◒
Driving position and comfort		○
Ride quality		★
Visibility/parking	hatchback	○
	estate	◒
Instrument layout		◒
Space in front		○
Space in rear		★
Loading/storage	hatchback	●
	estate	☆
Appearance and design		◒
Noise		○
Heating and ventilation		●
Recommend to a friend		47%

CITROËN XSARA

from Nov 97

DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr hatchback, 5-dr estate, 3-dr coupé
Engines 1.4, 1.6, 1.8 or 2.0 litre petrol, 1.4, 1.9 or 2.0 litre diesel
Prices new £9,850 (1.4i Forte) to £16,515 (2.0i VTS Coupé)
Dimensions 4.17m x 1.98m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Very high
Fuel Low
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 1/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 3/5
Test model: 1.4i 5-dr

Owners don't really like the Xsara, and rear visibility is a particular gripe. Questionable reliability, lax security and crippling depreciation don't improve the overall picture.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Airbags, seats/seat adjusters
1998 to 2000 Exhaust or emission control system (petrol), some engine electrics, handles/locks

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	○	–
Problems	●	○	–
Faults	○	○	–
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	–	○	–
Problems	–	○	–
Faults	–	●	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel	○	petrol	◒
Driving position and comfort				○
Ride quality	diesel	○	petrol	☆
Visibility/parking				●
Instrument layout				◒
Space in front				○
Space in rear				◒
Loading/storage				☆
Appearance and design				○
Noise	diesel	○	petrol	☆
Heating and ventilation				○
Recommend to a friend				37%

CITROËN XSARA PICASSO

from Jun 00

DETAILS

Body styles Small MPV with 5 seats
Engines 1.6, 1.8 or 2.0 litre petrol, 2.0 litre diesel
Prices new £12,830 (1.6i LX) to £16,815 (2.0i Exclusive)
Dimensions 4.28m x 1.76m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Low
Depreciation High
Fuel Very low
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 2/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 1.6i

The Picasso majors on space and design rather than driving experience and ride quality. Safety is OK, and it's cheap to run, as long as the low resale values don't bother you too much.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Braking system components
1998 to 2000 None

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	○	–
Problems	○	○	–
Faults	○	○	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel	◒	petrol	●
Driving position and comfort				○
Ride quality				●
Visibility/parking				◒
Instrument layout				☆
Space in front				☆
Space in rear				★
Loading/storage				★
Appearance and design				☆
Noise				☆
Heating and ventilation				●
Recommend to a friend				67%

DAEWOO LANOS (USED ONLY)

Sep 97 to Oct 02

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback, 4-dr saloon
Engines 1.4 or 1.6 litre petrol/LPG
Prices used around £2,500 to £6,000
Dimensions 4.07m x 1.86m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test 2.5/5

Despite reasonable reliability, the Lanos is a pretty dismal car – especially in such a competitive car class. It's unlikely to get any better with age, either.

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	◒
Driving position and comfort	○
Ride quality	◒
Visibility/parking	○
Instrument layout	◒
Space in front	○
Space in rear	○
Loading/storage	◒
Appearance and design	◒
Noise	●
Heating and ventilation	○
Recommend to a friend	34%

TROUBLESPOTS

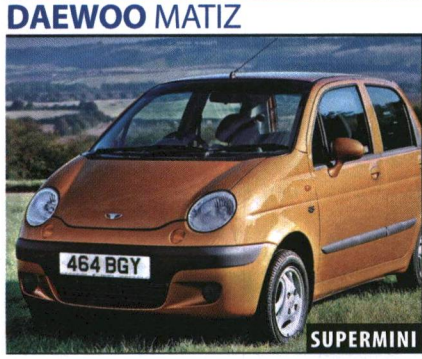
1998 to 2000 None

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	○	–
Problems	–	○	–
Faults	–	★	–

DAEWOO MATIZ

from Aug 98



DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr hatchback
Engines 0.8 or 1.0 litre petrol
Prices new £6,445 (0.8 SE) to £7,945 (1.0 SE+ a/c)
Dimensions 3.50m x 1.87m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Very low
Depreciation High
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test 3/5

The budget-level Matiz is no class leader but, if you're stuck on a factory-fresh car, you could do worse at this price. The main catching points are poor ride quality and stability at speed.

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	◒
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	●
Visibility/parking	★
Instrument layout	★
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	★
Loading/storage	●
Appearance and design	○
Noise	◒
Heating and ventilation	○
Recommend to a friend	54%

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None
1998 to 2000 None

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	○	–
Problems	○	○	–
Faults	○	○	–

DAEWOO NUBIRA (USED ONLY)

Sep 97 to Oct 02

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon or 5-dr estate
Engines 1.6 or 2.0 litre petrol, 1.6 litre petrol/LPG
Prices used around £2,700 to £6,600
Dimensions 4.47m x 1.70m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 2/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test n/a
Test model: 2.0 CDX Estate

The Nubira has been replaced by an all-new model, which can (hopefully) only improve on this mediocre one, which owners say is noisy and thirsty.

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	◒
Driving position and comfort	◒
Ride quality	◒
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	●
Space in front	○
Space in rear	☆
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	◒
Noise	●
Heating and ventilation	○
Recommend to a friend	36%

TROUBLESPOTS

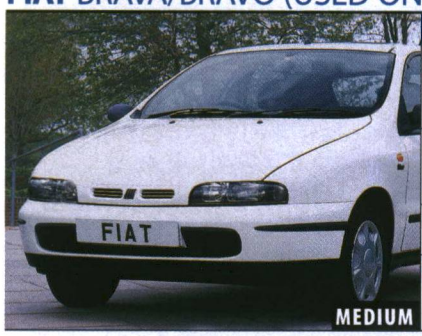
There were too few questionnaire replies to give specific reliability information for this model. Overall, Daewoo is average for reliability

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	–	–
Problems	–	–	–
Faults	–	–	–

FIAT BRAVA/BRAVO (USED ONLY)

Dec 95 to Jan 02



DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr hatchback (Bravo), 5-dr hatchback (Brava)
Engines 1.2, 1.4, 1.6, 1.8 or 2.0 litre petrol, 1.9 litre diesel
Prices used around £2,100 to £6,400
Dimensions 4.03m x 1.76m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 2/5
Test model: Brava SX 1.4 5-dr

Fiat surpassed itself by producing a car this poor. It has the dubious honour of being the car least liked by drivers in this year's survey. Don't buy one.

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 Washers/wipers
1995 to 1997 Battery, braking system components, interior equipment

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	●	●
Problems	–	○	●
Faults	–	○	○

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	◒
Driving position and comfort	◒
Ride quality	◒
Visibility/parking	●
Instrument layout	○
Space in front	○
Space in rear	◒
Loading/storage	◒
Appearance and design	◒
Noise	◒
Heating and ventilation	◒
Recommend to a friend	27%

FIAT MAREA (USED ONLY)

Mar 97 to Dec 02

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate
Engines 1.6, 1.8 or 2.0 litre petrol, 1.9 or 2.4 litre diesel
Prices used around £2,600 to £6,900
Dimensions 4.39m x 1.96m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car 5/10
Theft from car 2/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test n/a
Test model: 2.0 150 ELX 4-dr

The Marea offers nothing in the way of driving pleasure or ride quality. And it's a noisy beggar, too. Mercifully, Fiat has decided to put it out of its misery.

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 Fuel system

RELIABILITY

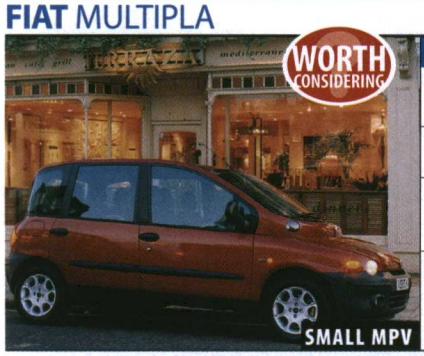
Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	○	–
Problems	–	○	–
Faults	–	○	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	●
Driving position and comfort	○
Ride quality	●
Visibility/parking	○
Instrument layout	◒
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	○
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	◒
Noise	●
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	40%

FIAT MULTIPLA

from Dec 99



DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr MPV with 6 seats
Engines 1.6 litre petrol, 1.9 litre diesel
Prices new £12,815 (1.6 100 SX) to £16,039 (1.9TD ELX)
Dimensions 4.00m x 1.88m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Low
Depreciation High
Fuel Low
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 2/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 3/5
Test model: 100 ELX

Owners like the odd-looking Multipla, and it's a cheap way of transporting six people. Fiat's reliability record is a cause for concern, though.

TROUBLESPOTS

There were too few questionnaire replies to give specific reliability information for this model. Overall, Fiat is poor for reliability.

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	–	–
Problems	–	–	–
Faults	–	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	○
Driving position and comfort	○
Ride quality	◒
Visibility/parking	★
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	◒
Space in rear	★
Loading/storage	○
Appearance and design	◒
Noise	◒
Heating and ventilation	◒
Recommend to a friend	78%

FIAT PUNTO

from Oct 99

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback
Engines 1.2, 1.4 or 1.7 litre petrol, 1.2 or 1.9 litre diesel
Prices new £6,840 (1.2 8v Active 3-dr) to £11,785 (1.8 16v HGT)
Dimensions 3.84m x 1.81m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Average
Fuel Low
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 2/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 1.9 diesel 60S 3-dr

The Punto has just had a face-lift, and it's still one of the most spacious superminis. Driving experience lets it down though, as do niggly rattles and squeaks.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Washers/wipers, gearbox or differential
1998 to 2000 Steering components, exterior trim

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	○	–
Problems	○	○	–
Faults	○	○	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	◒
Driving position and comfort	○
Ride quality	◒
Visibility/parking	◒
Instrument layout	◒
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	☆
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	☆
Noise	◒
Heating and ventilation	◒
Recommend to a friend	44%

FIAT PUNTO (USED ONLY)

Mar 94 to Sep 99

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback, 2-dr convertible
Engines 1.1, 1.2, 1.4 or 1.6 litre petrol, 1.7 diesel
Prices used up to around £5,400
Dimensions 3.76m x 1.62m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 2/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 2/5
Test model: 60S 5-dr

Unimpressive safety, sloppy drive and disappointing ride are all particular weak points here. The old Punto has some nasty troublespots, too, so you'd do well to steer clear.

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 Exhaust or emission control system, cylinder head/cylinder head gasket, braking system components, some interior equipment
1995 to 1997 Fuel system, exhaust or emission control system, cylinder head/cylinder head gasket, washers/wipers, paint lost its shine

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	○	○
Problems	–	○	○
Faults	–	●	●

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	●
Driving position and comfort	○
Ride quality	◒
Visibility/parking	◒
Instrument layout	○
Space in front	○
Space in rear	★
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	◒
Noise	◒
Heating and ventilation	◒
Recommend to a friend	31%

FORD ESCORT/ORION (USED ONLY)

Sep 90 to Jul 00

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback, 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate, 2-dr convertible
Engines 1.3, 1.4, 1.6, 1.8 or 2.0 litre petrol, 1.8 litre diesel
Prices used up to around £6,400
Dimensions 4.30m x 1.88m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 2/5
Test model: 1.6 LX 5-dr

Something of an institution, but disappoints on many levels. There are much better used cars.

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 Exhaust or emission control system (petrol), washers/wipers, clutch, paintwork chipped/lifted/peeled/blistered
1995 to 1997 Exhaust or emission control system (petrol), fuel system (diesel), other engine electrics (diesel), cam belt/timing belt (diesel), dashboard switches/control stalks, clutch, braking system components, suspension components, exterior trim

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	○	○
Problems	–	★	○
Faults	–	○	○
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	–	–	○
Problems	–	–	○
Faults	–	–	●

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel ◒	petrol	●
Driving position and comfort			◒
Ride quality	diesel ○	petrol	◒
Visibility/parking	saloon		☆
	hatchback		○
	estate		○
Instrument layout			○
Space in front			◒
Space in rear			◒
Loading/storage	saloon		○
	hatchback		☆
	estate		☆
Appearance and design			◒
Noise	diesel ●	petrol	◒
Heating and ventilation			○
Recommend to a friend			32%

FORD FIESTA

from Apr 02

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback
Engines 1.25, 1.3, 1.4 or 1.6 litre petrol, 1.4 litre diesel
Prices new £7,865 (1.25 Finesse 3-dr) to £11,390 (1.4TDCi Ghia)
Dimensions 3.92m x 1.91m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Very high
Depreciation Very high
Fuel High
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 4/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: Ghia 1.4 5-dr

The latest Fiesta seems to be a good all-rounder. Owners aren't particularly enthusiastic, though, and the wicked depreciation contributes to high running costs.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	–	–
Problems	★	–	–
Faults	★	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	○
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	◒
Space in front	○
Space in rear	☆
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	○
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	62%

FORD FIESTA (USED ONLY)

Oct 95 to Mar 02

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback
Engines 1.25, 1.3, 1.4, or 1.6 litre petrol, 1.8 litre diesel
Prices used up to around £7,600
Dimensions 3.83m x 1.80m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 2/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 3/5
Test model: 1.25 LX 3-dr

The previous incarnation of the Fiesta is not a very well-liked car. But it is generally reliable, so could be worth a look at the right price.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None
1998 to 2000 Exhaust or emission control system, rainwater seals
1995 to 1997 Braking system components, suspension components, handles/locks

RELIABILITY

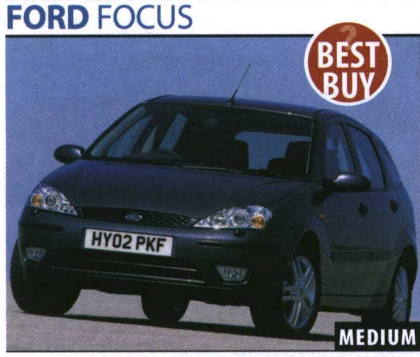
Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	★	★
Problems	★	○	○
Faults	★	○	○

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience			○
Driving position and comfort			◒
Ride quality	diesel ◒	petrol	○
Visibility/parking			☆
Instrument layout			◒
Space in front			○
Space in rear			◒
Loading/storage			○
Appearance and design			◒
Noise	diesel ●	petrol	○
Heating and ventilation			○
Recommend to a friend			42%

FORD FOCUS

from Oct 98



DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback, 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate
Engines 1.4, 1.6, 1.8 or 2.0 litre petrol, 1.8 diesel, 1.8 petrol/LPG
Prices new £9,850 (1.4i Studio) to £19,915 (2.0T)
Dimensions 4.16m x 2.01m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation High
Fuel Low
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 4/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 1.8 LX 5-dr

The Focus has helped turn Ford's fortunes around. It's a Best Buy again – reliable and pretty safe.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None
1998 to 2000 Steering components

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	★	–
Problems	★	★	–
Faults	★	★	–
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	○	○	–
Problems	★	○	–
Faults	★	○	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience		☆
Driving position and comfort		○
Ride quality		☆
Visibility/parking	saloon	◒
	hatchback	○
	estate	◒
Instrument layout		☆
Space in front		○
Space in rear		☆
Loading/storage	saloon	◒
	hatchback	●
	estate	○
Appearance and design		☆
Noise	diesel ◒	petrol ○
Heating and ventilation		○
Recommend to a friend		73%

FORD GALAXY

from Jun 95

DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr MPV with 5, 6 or 7 seats
Engines 2.0, 2.3 or 2.8 litre petrol, 1.9 litre diesel
Prices new £18,215 (2.3 LX) to £24,215 (2.8 Ghia)
Dimensions 4.62m x 2.15m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall High
Depreciation High
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test n/a

The Galaxy is troublesome, unreliable and expensive to run. The Seat Alhambra and VW Sharan share many of its parts, but the Galaxy is the least liked of the three.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Washers/wipers, air conditioning, handles/locks
1998 to 2000 Some engine electrics, lights/light units, electric windows, other non-engine electrics, air conditioning, other heating/ventilation components
1995 to 1997 Some main engine components, electric windows, other non-engine electrics, air conditioning, gears/clutch, braking system components, seats/seat adjusters

RELIABILITY

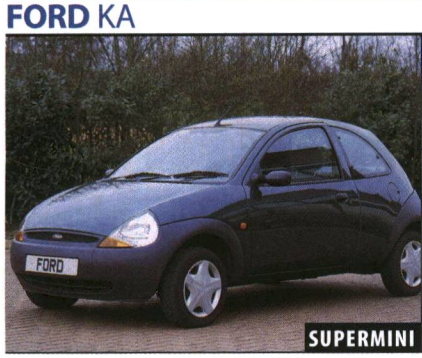
Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	●	○	●
Problems	○	●	●
Faults	●	●	●

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel	☆	petrol	○
Driving position and comfort				○
Ride quality	diesel	☆	petrol	○
Visibility/parking				◒
Instrument layout				○
Space in front				☆
Space in rear				○
Loading/storage				◒
Appearance and design				◒
Noise	diesel	◒	petrol	○
Heating and ventilation				◒
Recommend to a friend				49%

FORD KA

from Sep 96



DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr hatchback, 2-dr convertible
Engines 1.3 or 1.6 litre petrol
Prices new £6,520 (1.3) to £13,460 (1.6 Luxury StreetKa)
Dimensions 3.62m x 1.83m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Very low
Depreciation Average
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Poor
Crash test 3/5
Test model: 1.3i

The Ka is reliable and very cheap to run. Safety is lacking, though, and space in the back and the boot is, not surprisingly, poor.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None
1998 to 2000 Exhaust or emission control system, steering components, suspension components
1995 to 1997 None

RELIABILITY

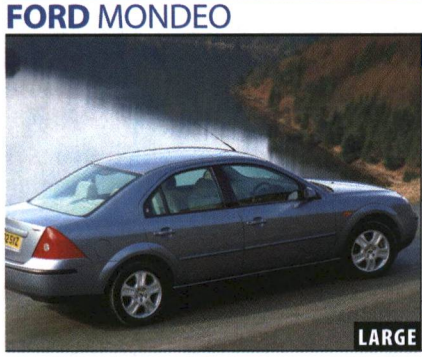
Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	★	○
Problems	★	○	★
Faults	★	○	○

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	◒
Ride quality	☆
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	●
Loading/storage	●
Appearance and design	☆
Noise	◒
Heating and ventilation	○
Recommend to a friend	62%

FORD MONDEO

from Oct 00



DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr hatchback, 5-dr estate, 4-dr saloon
Engines 1.8, 2.0, 2.5 or 3.0 litre petrol, 2.0 diesel
Prices new £13,815 (1.8 Graphite hatchback) to £22,565 (3.0 ST220 estate)
Dimensions 4.74m x 1.94m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Average
Fuel Low
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 4/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 1.8 LX 5-dr

The Mondeo is a spacious family-sized car and a reasonable all-rounder. But noise, irritating problems and faulty parts are definite weaknesses.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Some heating/ventilation components, braking system components, steering components, seat belts

RELIABILITY

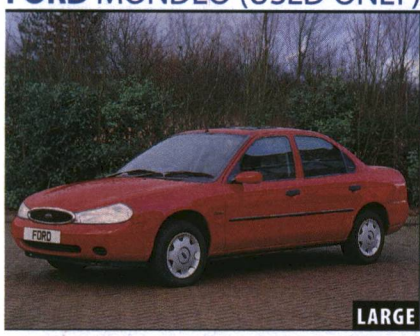
Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	★	–	–
Problems	●	–	–
Faults	●	–	–
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	★	–	–
Problems	○	–	–
Faults	○	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience				○
Driving position and comfort				☆
Ride quality	diesel	★	petrol	○
Visibility/parking	saloon			◒
	hatchback			○
	estate			◒
Instrument layout				○
Space in front				☆
Space in rear				★
Loading/storage				☆
Appearance and design				○
Noise	diesel	●	petrol	◒
Heating and ventilation				◒
Recommend to a friend				64%

FORD MONDEO (USED ONLY)

Feb 93 to Oct 00



DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr hatchback, 5-dr estate
Engines 1.6, 1.8, 2.0 or 2.5 litre petrol, 1.8 litre diesel
Prices used up to around £10,400
Dimensions 4.48m x 1.93m

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 Fuel system (diesel), engine electrics (diesel), washers/wipers, other non-engine electrics, air conditioning, gears/clutch, steering components, suspension components, rainwater seals
1995 to 1997 Cam belt/timing belt (petrol), alarm/immobiliser (diesel), some heating/ventilation components, suspension components

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 2.5/5
Test model: 1.8 LX 5-dr

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	○	○
Problems	–	○	○
Faults	–	○	○
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	–	○	○
Problems	–	○	○
Faults	–	●	○

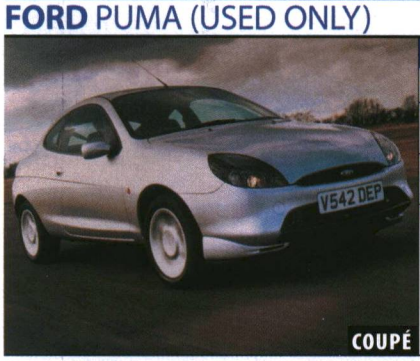
Old Mondeo has little going for it. There's too much engine noise and troublespots aplenty, too.

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience		◒
Driving position and comfort		○
Ride quality	diesel ○ petrol	◒
Visibility/parking	saloon	○
	hatchback	☆
	estate	◒
Instrument layout		○
Space in front		○
Space in rear		○
Loading/storage	saloon	★
	hatchback	○
	estate	★
Appearance and design		◒
Noise	diesel ● petrol	◒
Heating and ventilation		◒
Recommend to a friend		48%

FORD PUMA (USED ONLY)

Jun 97 to Dec 01



DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr coupé
Engines 1.6 or 1.7 litre petrol
Prices used around £5,900 to £11,200
Dimensions 3.99m x 1.84m

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Electric windows
1998 to 2000 Paintwork chipped/lifted/peeled/blistered

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test n/a

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	★	–
Problems	○	○	–
Faults	○	○	–

Owners praise the Puma's handling, ride and road manners. If fun is more important to you than space, then this car is hard to beat at the price.

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	★
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	★
Visibility/parking	●
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	○
Space in rear	●
Loading/storage	◒
Appearance and design	★
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	★
Recommend to a friend	70%

HONDA ACCORD (USED ONLY)

Jul 98 to Feb 03

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr hatchback, 2-dr coupé
Engines 1.8, 2.0, 2.2, 2.3 or 3.0 litre petrol
Prices used around £4,800 to £14,300
Dimensions 4.60m x 1.93m inc mirrors

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None
1998 to 2000 None

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car 8/10
Theft from car 4/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 2.0 i-VTEC

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	★	★	–
Problems	★	★	–
Faults	★	★	–

Last year's Best Buy large car has a terrific reliability record, and no serious drawbacks. Replaced earlier this year by an all-new Accord, so there should be some used bargains available.

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience		☆
Driving position and comfort		○
Ride quality		☆
Visibility/parking		☆
Instrument layout		○
Space in front		◒
Space in rear		○
Loading/storage	saloon	☆
	hatchback	○
Appearance and design		○
Noise		○
Heating and ventilation		☆
Recommend to a friend		67%

HONDA CIVIC

from Dec 00

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback, 4-dr saloon, 2-dr coupé
Engines 1.4, 1.6 or 2.0 litre petrol, 1.7 litre diesel, 1.3 litre hybrid
Prices new £9,870 (1.4i E 3-dr) to £16,815 (2.0i Type R a/c)
Dimensions 4.44m x 1.93m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Low
Depreciation Low
Fuel Very low
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 1.6 SE 5-dr

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	★	–	–
Problems	★	–	–
Faults	★	–	–

Cracking reliability, low running costs and spacious interior are what make the Civic a Best Buy again. It looks bland, though, and luggage space is lacking.

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	○
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	○
Instrument layout	○
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	★
Loading/storage	◒
Appearance and design	◒
Noise	○
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	71%

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None

HONDA CIVIC (USED ONLY)

Mar 95 to Dec 00

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback, 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate, 2-dr coupé
Engines 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, or 1.8 litre petrol, 2.0 litre diesel
Prices used around £2,500 to £7,700
Dimensions 4.33m x 1.70m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 2/10
Safety
Overall Poor
Crash test 2.5/5
Test model: 1.5i LS 3-dr

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	★	★
Problems	–	★	○
Faults	–	○	○

A reliable used purchase, the older Civic is good to drive and fairly comfortable. Not as spacious as the latest version, though.

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience		☆
Driving position and comfort		○
Ride quality		☆
Visibility/parking		○
Instrument layout		○
Space in front		◒
Space in rear		◒
Loading/storage	saloon	◒
	hatchback	○
	estate	○
Appearance and design		○
Noise		○
Heating and ventilation		◒
Recommend to a friend		63%

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 Exhaust or emission control system
1995 to 1997 Exhaust or emission control system

HONDA CR-V

from Jan 02

DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr estate
Engines 2.0 litre petrol
Prices new £16,515 (2.0 SE) to £20,315 (2.0 SE Executive)
Dimensions 4.53m x 2.05m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Low
Depreciation Low
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test 4/5

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	★	–	–
Problems	★	–	–
Faults	★	–	–

The new CR-V offers superb reliability, low running costs and is a good load-lugger. Owners generally like it, though be aware that they probably use it mostly on the road.

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	◒
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	◒
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	○
Space in rear	★
Loading/storage	★
Appearance and design	◒
Noise	★
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	83%

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None

HONDA HR-V

from Feb 99

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr estate
Engines 1.6 litre petrol
Prices new £15,215 (1.6i 5-dr auto)
Dimensions 4.01m x 2.00m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Very low
Depreciation Average
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test n/a

Like the CR-V, the HR-V probably rarely leaves the tarmac, but it drives well and is cheap to run. Space for rear passengers and luggage is poor, but otherwise the HR-V has few drawbacks.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	–	–
Problems	★	–	–
Faults	★	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	★
Driving position and comfort	◒
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	○
Space in rear	●
Loading/storage	●
Appearance and design	◒
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	76%

HONDA JAZZ

from Nov 01

DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr hatchback
Engines 1.4 litre petrol
Prices new £8,870 (1.4i S) to £12,070 (1.4i SE Sport CVT-7)
Dimensions 3.83m x 1.88m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Low
Depreciation Very low
Fuel Very low
Security
Theft of car 8/10
Theft from car 4/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test n/a
Test model: 1.4i SE Sport

Honda's supermini delivers what you would expect – impressive reliability, low running costs and plenty of space. Ride quality is the only obvious weakness in the whole package. A new Best Buy.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	★	–	–
Problems	★	–	–
Faults	★	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	●
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	○
Space in rear	★
Loading/storage	★
Appearance and design	☆
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	78%

HYUNDAI ACCENT

from Jan 00

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr hatchback, 3-dr coupé
Engines 1.3, 1.5 or 1.6 litre petrol, 1.5 litre diesel
Prices new £8,570 (1.3 GSi) to £10,850 (1.6 CDX)
Dimensions 4.20m x 1.67m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Very low
Depreciation Very high
Fuel Low
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 2/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test n/a
Test model: 1.3 GSi

The Accent is cheap to buy and run, despite huge depreciation. It'll get you from A to B, but it lags behind most rivals when it comes to security and enjoyment.

TROUBLESPOTS

There were too few questionnaire replies to give specific reliability information for this model. Overall, Hyundai is very good for reliability.

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	–	–
Problems	–	–	–
Faults	–	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	●
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	★
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	○
Space in rear	☆
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	◒
Noise	◒
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	59%

JAGUAR S-TYPE

from Oct 98

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon
Engines 2.5, 3.0, 4.0 or 4.2 litre petrol
Prices new £24,770 (2.5 V6) to £47,220 (4.2R)
Dimensions 4.88m x 2.06m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Average
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car 8/10
Theft from car 7/10
Safety
Overall Very good
Crash test n/a
Test model: 3.0 SE auto

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	○	–
Problems	○	○	–
Faults	○	○	–

Owners love the S-type, which looks and drives like a Jaguar should. Safety and security standards are high, helping make it a Best Buy this year, but space in the back and boot is poor.

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	★
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	☆
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	○
Space in rear	●
Loading/storage	●
Appearance and design	★
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	88%

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Some non-engine electrics
1998 to 2000 Central locking

JAGUAR X-TYPE

from Feb 01

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon
Engines 2.1, 2.5 or 3.0 litre petrol, 2.0 diesel
Prices new £19,815 (2.0 V6) to £28,820 (3.0 V6 Indianapolis)
Dimensions 4.68m x 2.01m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall High
Depreciation Very low
Fuel High
Security
Theft of car 8/10
Theft from car 6/10
Safety
Overall Good
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 3.0 SE

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	–	–
Problems	○	–	–
Faults	○	–	–

Jaguar's answer to the BMW 3 series and Mercedes C-Class is a worthy rival in many ways. It's not terribly spacious, though, and owners complain that the engines are rather thirsty.

OWNERS' VERDICTS

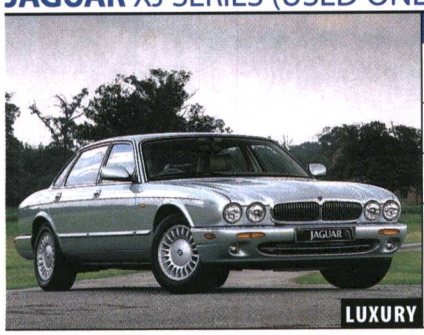
Driving experience	○
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	☆
Visibility/parking	★
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	◒
Space in rear	○
Loading/storage	○
Appearance and design	★
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	74%

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Automatic transmission, suspension components

JAGUAR XJ SERIES (USED ONLY)

Sep 94 to Dec 02



DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon
Engines 3.2 or 4.0 litre petrol
Prices used up to around £38,000
Dimensions 5.06m x 2.08m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test n/a

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	●	○
Problems	–	○	○
Faults	–	○	○

The recently replaced XJ has always been popular with its owners. But interior space is poor for its class, and owners report breakdowns and high running costs.

OWNERS' VERDICTS

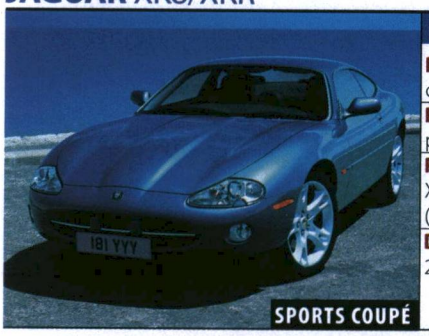
Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	☆
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	○
Space in front	◒
Space in rear	●
Loading/storage	●
Appearance and design	★
Noise	★
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	80%

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 Braking system components, suspension components
1997 to 1997 None

JAGUAR XK8/XKR

from Oct 96



DETAILS

Body styles 2-dr coupé, 2-dr convertible
Engines 4.0 or 4.2 litre petrol
Prices new £48,520 (4.2 XK8 Coupé) to £63,170 (4.2 XKR Convertible)
Dimensions 4.76m x 2.02m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Very high
Depreciation High
Fuel Very high
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test n/a

The recently face-lifted Jaguar coupé/convertible is, not surprisingly, well loved by owners. Beware running costs, though – this is a seriously expensive car to own.

TROUBLESPOTS

There were too few questionnaire replies to give specific reliability information for this model. Overall, Jaguar is average for reliability.

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	–	–
Problems	–	–	–
Faults	–	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	☆
Visibility/parking	◒
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	◒
Loading/storage	★
Appearance and design	☆
Noise	★
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	85%

JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE

from Jan 96

DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr estate
Engines 4.0 or 4.7 litre petrol, 2.5, 2.7 or 3.1 litre diesel
Prices new £27,810 (4.0) to £33,815 (4.7 Overland)
Dimensions 4.61m x 2.24m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Very high
Depreciation Very high
Fuel Very high
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test n/a

Not as grand as its name suggests, this Jeep is beaten by its main rivals for driving experience, ride quality and interior space. Owners rightly complain about the cost of ownership.

TROUBLESPOTS

There were too few questionnaire replies to give specific reliability information for this model. Overall, Jeep is average for reliability.

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	–	–
Problems	–	–	–
Faults	–	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	◒
Driving position and comfort	★
Ride quality	◒
Visibility/parking	○
Instrument layout	○
Space in front	◒
Space in rear	◒
Loading/storage	○
Appearance and design	○
Noise	○
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	54%

LAND ROVER DISCOVERY

from Oct 98

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr estate with 5 or 7 seats
Engines 2.0 or 4.0 litre petrol, 2.5 litre diesel
Prices new £21,810 (2.5 Td5 E 5-seat) to £36,315 (4.0 V8i Metropolis)
Dimensions 4.71m x 2.19m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall High
Depreciation High
Fuel High
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test n/a

The Discovery is as troublesome, disappointing and expensive as ever. Unless you plan to take it off the road, there are other 4x4s which are a much better bet.

TROUBLESPOTS

Reliability and troublespots information is also for pre-Oct 98 models
2001 to 2003 Washers/wipers, rainwater seals, exterior trim
1998 to 2000 Cooling system, battery, dashboard switches/control stalks, audio equipment, gears/clutch, rainwater seals, seat belts
1995 to 1997 Fuel system, alarm/immobiliser, battery, other engine electrics, cam belt/timing belt, gears/clutch, braking system components, steering components, interior equipment, paintwork chipped/lifted/peeled/blistered

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	○	●
Problems	●	○	●
Faults	●	○	○

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	●
Driving position and comfort	○
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	●
Instrument layout	●
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	○
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	☆
Noise	◒
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	50%

LAND ROVER FREELANDER

from Oct 97

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr estate, 3-dr soft top
Engines 1.8 or 2.5 litre petrol, 2.0 diesel
Prices new £15,815 (1.8 S 3-dr) to £26,415 (2.5 V6 ES Premium)
Dimensions 4.39m x 2.08m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation High
Fuel Low
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test 3/5

Owners don't really like the Freelander and, with a list of troublespots like this, it's not hard to see why.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Electric windows, interior equipment
1998 to 2000 Exhaust or emission control system (petrol), cooling system (petrol), cylinder head/cylinder head gasket (petrol), dashboard switches/control stalks, electric windows, gears/clutch, steering components, some interior equipment

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	●	–
Problems	○	●	–
Faults	●	○	–
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	○	○	–
Problems	○	●	–
Faults	○	○	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel ☆ petrol ◒
Driving position and comfort	○
Ride quality	☆
Visibility/parking	◒
Instrument layout	○
Space in front	●
Space in rear	☆
Loading/storage	◒
Appearance and design	☆
Noise	diesel ☆ petrol ◒
Heating and ventilation	●
Recommend to a friend	49%

LAND ROVER RANGE ROVER (USED ONLY)

Sep 94 to Jan 02

DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr estate
Engines 3.9, 4.0, 4.3 or 4.6 litre petrol, 2.5 litre diesel
Prices used around £6,300 to £32,000
Dimensions 4.72m x 1.89m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test n/a

A luxurious mud-plugger that's mainly let down by ride quality, cost of ownership and Land Rover's overall poor reliability. Replaced by an all-new Range Rover last year.

TROUBLESPOTS

There were too few questionnaire replies to give specific information for this model. Overall, Land Rover is poor for reliability.

RELIABILITY

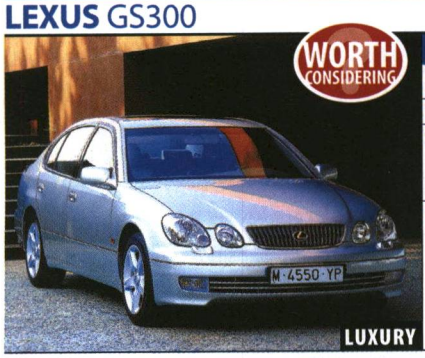
Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	–	–
Problems	–	–	–
Faults	–	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	○
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	◒
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	○
Space in front	◒
Space in rear	☆
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	★
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	57%

LEXUS GS300

from Oct 93



DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon
Engines 3.0 litre petrol
Prices new £30,770 (3.0 SE) to £33,980 (3.0 SE Navigator and Levision)
Dimensions 4.81m x 1.95m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Very high
Depreciation Average
Fuel Very high
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test n/a

A worthy competitor to the more 'established' luxury cars, the GS300 majors on driveability and comfort. Boot space is mean, though, and it's expensive to run.

TROUBLESPOTS

There were too few questionnaire replies to give specific reliability information for this model. Overall, Lexus is very good for reliability.

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	–	–
Problems	–	–	–
Faults	–	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	★
Driving position and comfort	★
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	○
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	◒
Space in rear	○
Loading/storage	●
Appearance and design	○
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	★
Recommend to a friend	85%

LEXUS IS200/IS300

from Mar 99

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate
Engines 2.0 or 3.0 litre petrol
Prices new £18,435 (2.0) to £30,930 (3.0 with Navigator and styling kit)
Dimensions 4.40m x 1.93m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Low
Fuel Very high
Security
Theft of car 8/10
Theft from car 4/10
Safety
Overall Good
Crash test n/a
Test model: IS200 4-dr

Has been a Best Buy for the last few years, and retains the crown comfortably again this year. It's a driver's car that's also reliable and safe. Downsides are saloon's stingy boot and thirst for petrol.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Exterior trim
1998 to 2000 Exterior trim

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	★	★	–
Problems	○	○	–
Faults	★	★	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	★
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	◒
Space in rear	○
Loading/storage	●
Appearance and design	☆
Noise	★
Heating and ventilation	★
Recommend to a friend	88%

MAZDA 323 (USED ONLY)

Oct 98 to Aug 03

DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr hatchback
Engines 1.3, 1.5, 1.6, 1.8 or 2.0 litre petrol, 2.0 diesel
Prices used around £2,100 to £10,200
Dimensions 4.25m x 1.71m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test n/a
Test model: 323F 1.3 16V 5-dr

The 323 has impressive reliability, and owners have hardly any gripes. Safety and security could be better, though. It's being replaced by the Mazda 3, so look out for price reductions.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None
1998 to 2000 Ignition system

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	★	★	–
Problems	★	★	–
Faults	★	○	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	○
Ride quality	◒
Visibility/parking	○
Instrument layout	○
Space in front	○
Space in rear	☆
Loading/storage	○
Appearance and design	○
Noise	◒
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	64%

MAZDA 626 (USED ONLY)

Jun 97 to Jun 02

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr hatchback, 5-dr estate
Engines 1.8 or 2.0 litre petrol, 2.0 litre diesel
Prices used around £1,900 to £7,400
Dimensions 4.70m x 1.76m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 1/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test n/a
Test model: 2.0 GSi

It's reliable, spacious and good to drive, but the 626 is below par in many other respects. It's been replaced by the Mazda 6, which has received positive early feedback from owners.

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 None

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	★	–
Problems	–	★	–
Faults	–	○	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	◒
Ride quality	◒
Visibility/parking	◒
Instrument layout	◒
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	★
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	◒
Noise	◒
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	70%

MAZDA MX-5

from Jan 90

DETAILS

Body styles 2-dr convertible
Engines 1.6 or 1.8 litre petrol
Prices new £14,815 (1.6i) to £18,815 (1.8i Montana)
Dimensions 4.02m x 1.83m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Very low
Depreciation Average
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test 4/5

This perennially-loved roadster is good to drive, if a little unrefined overall. Generally reliable, but recent models have been let down by clutch problems. Good value, though, and cheap to run.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Clutch
1998 to 2000 None
1995 to 1997 None

RELIABILITY

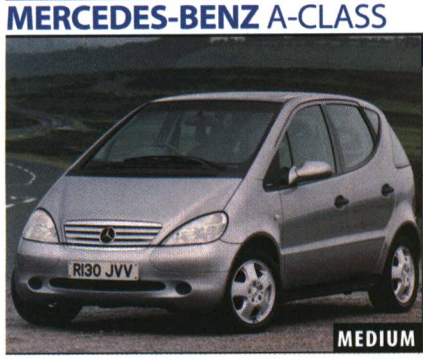
Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	○	★
Problems	○	★	★
Faults	○	★	★

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	◒
Ride quality	◒
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	○
Space in front	◒
Space in rear	–
Loading/storage	●
Appearance and design	◒
Noise	◒
Heating and ventilation	○
Recommend to a friend	89%

MERCEDES-BENZ A-CLASS

from Sep 98



DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr hatchback
Engines 1.4, 1.6 1.9 or 2.1 litre ptrl, 1.7 litre dsl
Prices new £13,105 (A140 Classic SWB) to £20,070 (A210 Evolution LWB)
Dimensions 3.61m (SWB) to 3.78 (LWB) x 1.95m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall High
Depreciation Average
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: A140 Classic

The A-Class disappoints owners in too many key areas. Poor ride quality and stability at speed are serious complaints, along with expensive parts and servicing.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Engine electrics
1998 to 2000 Fuel system, ignition system, dashboard switches/control stalks, electric windows, steering components, suspension components

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	○	–
Problems	○	●	–
Faults	○	●	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	◒
Driving position and comfort	○
Ride quality	●
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	◒
Space in front	○
Space in rear	★
Loading/storage	◒
Appearance and design	☆
Noise diesel ◒ petrol	☆
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	50%

MERCEDES-BENZ C-CLASS

from Sep 00

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate and 3-dr coupé
Engines 1.8, 2.0, 2.3, 2.6 or 3.2 litre petrol, 2.1 or 2.7 diesel
Prices new £18,890 (C180 Coupé) to £31,250 (C320 SE estate)
Dimensions 4.53m (4-dr) x 1.96m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Very high
Depreciation Low
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 5/10
Safety
Overall Good
Crash test 5/5
Test model: C200 Elegance 4-dr

The latest C-Class pushes many of the right buttons for owners, and offers good safety and security, too. It holds its value well, but is expensive to run in most other respects.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Fuel system (petrol), cooling system (petrol), suspension components

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	–	–
Problems	○	–	–
Faults	○	–	–
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	○	–	–
Problems	○	–	–
Faults	○	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	☆
Visibility/parking	★
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	○
Space in rear	◒
Loading/storage	◒
Appearance and design	★
Noise diesel ☆ petrol	★
Heating and ventilation	○
Recommend to a friend	78%

MERCEDES-BENZ C-CLASS (USED ONLY)

Oct 93 to Sep 00

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate
Engines 1.8, 2.0, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6 or 2.8 litre petrol, 2.2 or 2.5 litre diesel
Prices used around £5,300 to £17,300
Dimensions 4.48m x 1.72m

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 None
1995 to 1997 None

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 4/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 2/5
Test model: C200 Elegance 4-dr

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	★	○
Problems	–	○	○
Faults	–	○	○
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	–	○	–
Problems	–	★	–
Faults	–	○	–

The older C-Class is a good used buy – it has good build quality, and there are no particular troublespots. But safety isn't a strong point, and owners say parts and servicing costs are high.

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel	★	petrol	☆
Driving position and comfort				○
Ride quality	diesel	○	petrol	☆
Visibility/parking				☆
Instrument layout				☆
Space in front				○
Space in rear				◒
Loading/storage				●
Appearance and design				○
Noise				★
Heating and ventilation				☆
Recommend to a friend				64%

MERCEDES-BENZ CLK (USED ONLY)

Jun 97 to Jun 02

DETAILS

Body styles 2-dr coupé, 2-dr convertible
Engines 2.0, 2.3, 3.2 or 4.3 litre petrol
Prices used around £14,500 to £34,000
Dimensions 4.57m x 1.97m

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 None

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test n/a

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	○	–
Problems	–	○	–
Faults	–	○	–

The CLK seems more like a saloon in sporty clothes than a serious attempt at a coupé/ convertible. It was replaced last year by an all-new model that promises better things.

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	◒
Driving position and comfort	◒
Ride quality	◒
Visibility/parking	○
Instrument layout	○
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	☆
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	◒
Noise	★
Heating and ventilation	◒
Recommend to a friend	69%

MERCEDES-BENZ E-CLASS (USED ONLY)

Oct 95 to Aug 02

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate
Engines 2.0, 2.3, 2.4, 2.8, 3.2 or 4.3 litre petrol, 2.2, 2.5, 3.0 or 3.2 litre diesel
Prices used around £7,200 to £31,900
Dimensions 4.80m x 1.80m

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Lights/light units, washers/wipers
1998 to 2000 Automatic transmission, paintwork chipped/ lifted/peeled/ blistered
1995 to 1997 None

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car 8/10
Theft from car 4/10
Safety
Overall Very good
Crash test 4/5
Test model: E240 Elegance

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	○	★
Problems	–	○	★
Faults	–	○	○
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	●	★	–
Problems	●	●	–
Faults	○	○	–

The older E-Class is well liked by owners and worth a look if you're buying used. Stick to petrol versions, though, as diesels have questionable reliability.

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel	★	petrol	○
Driving position and comfort				◒
Ride quality	diesel	◒	petrol	☆
Visibility/parking	saloon			☆
	estate			○
Instrument layout				☆
Space in front				○
Space in rear				☆
Loading/storage				☆
Appearance and design				○
Noise	diesel	○	petrol	☆
Heating and ventilation				◒
Recommend to a friend				82%

MERCEDES-BENZ M-CLASS

from Apr 98

DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr estate
Engines 3.2, 3.7 or 5.0 litre petrol, 2.7 litre diesel
Prices new £30,220 (ML270 CDi) to £43,260 (ML500)
Dimensions 4.59m x 2.19m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall High
Depreciation Very low
Fuel High
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test 4/5

Mercedes' luxury 4x4 targets the same buyers as the BMW X5, but it can't touch the BMW for owner satisfaction. No serious weaknesses, but you'd expect more for the money.

TROUBLESPOTS

There were too few questionnaire replies to give specific reliability information for this model. Overall, Mercedes-Benz is average for reliability.

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	–	–
Problems	–	–	–
Faults	–	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	○
Ride quality	◒
Visibility/parking	○
Instrument layout	◒
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	☆
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	○
Noise	○
Heating and ventilation	◒
Recommend to a friend	54%

MERCEDES-BENZ SLK

from Nov 96

DETAILS

Body styles 2-dr convertible
Engines 2.0, 2.3 or 3.2 litre petrol
Prices new £25,270 (200) to £31,810 (320 auto)
Dimensions 4.01m x 1.72m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Very Low
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test 4/5

The SLK is always in demand, so it holds its value well. People certainly like it, but, as with other Mercedes, the parts and servicing costs are fairly steep.

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 None

RELIABILITY

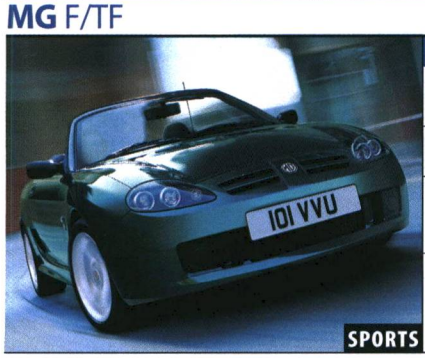
Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	○	–
Problems	–	★	–
Faults	–	★	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	○
Driving position and comfort	○
Ride quality	☆
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	◒
Space in front	○
Space in rear	–
Loading/storage	○
Appearance and design	○
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	○
Recommend to a friend	83%

MG F/TF

from Sep 95



DETAILS

Body styles 2-dr convertible
Engines 1.6 or 1.8 litre petrol
Prices new £15,585 (1.6 115) to £19,830 (1.8 160)
Dimensions 3.94m x 1.81m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Low
Depreciation Low
Fuel Low
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test 4/5 (TF)

The MG is the least exciting sports car in this year's survey, with poor road manners and build quality. The Mazda MX-5 is a more fulfilling and reliable option for a similar price.

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 Cylinder head/cylinder head gasket, interior equipment

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	○	–
Problems	–	○	–
Faults	–	○	–
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	–	○	–
Problems	–	○	–
Faults	–	○	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	●
Driving position and comfort	◒
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	◒
Instrument layout	◒
Space in front	◒
Space in rear	–
Loading/storage	◒
Appearance and design	☆
Noise	●
Heating and ventilation	◒
Recommend to a friend	52%

MINI

from Apr 01

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr hatchback
Engines 1.6 litre petrol, 1.4 litre diesel
Prices new £10,255 (1.6 One) to £15,790 (1.6 Cooper S Chilli)
Dimensions 3.63m x 1.93m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall High
Depreciation Very low
Fuel High
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 5/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: Cooper 1.6

It's not as frugal as some other superminis, but this retro-chic car is well liked and fun to drive.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Gears/clutch, braking system components, steering components, seats/seat adjusters

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	–	–
Problems	○	–	–
Faults	○	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	★
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	☆
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	○
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	◒
Loading/storage	●
Appearance and design	★
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	88%

MITSUBISHI CARISMA

from Oct 95

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr hatchback
Engines 1.6, 1.8 or 2.0 litre petrol, 1.9 litre diesel
Prices new £9,825 (1.6 Classic) to £11,855 (1.9TD Elegance)
Dimensions 4.48m x 1.96m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Very low
Depreciation Average
Fuel Very Low
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 3/5
Test model: 1.8

The unfortunately-monikered Carisma may be an economical buy, but it has little to offer by way of a rewarding driving experience.

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 Exhaust or emission control system, central locking

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	○	–
Problems	–	○	–
Faults	–	●	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	◒
Driving position and comfort	●
Ride quality	◒
Visibility/parking	○
Instrument layout	○
Space in front	◒
Space in rear	○
Loading/storage	○
Appearance and design	●
Noise	◒
Heating and ventilation	○
Recommend to a friend	42%

MITSUBISHI GALANT

from Mar 97

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate
Engines 2.0, 2.4 or 2.5 litre petrol
Prices new £17,810 (2.4 GDI Equippe 4-dr) to £20,810 (2.5 V6 Elegance 5-dr)
Dimensions 4.63m x 1.88m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall High
Depreciation High
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test n/a

The Galant is more spacious, if a lot less economical, than its stable mate, the Carisma. It's nothing special, but has few particular weak points.

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 None

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	○	–
Problems	–	○	–
Faults	–	○	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	○
Driving position and comfort	○
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	◒
Space in front	○
Space in rear	☆
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	○
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	61%

NISSAN ALMERA

from Feb 00

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback, 4-dr saloon
Engines 1.5 or 1.8 litre petrol, 2.2 litre diesel
Prices new £9,850 (1.5 Pulse 3-dr) to £15,095 (2.2dCi SXE 5-dr)
Dimensions 4.12m x 1.69m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Low
Depreciation Average
Fuel Very low
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 4/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 1.8 SE 5dr

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None
1998 to 2000 None

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	★	○	–
Problems	★	★	–
Faults	★	★	–

The Best Buy Almera maintains the quality and reliability of its predecessor, and even addresses a few of its shortfalls. Reliable and affordable motoring, with reasonable safety and security.

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	○
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	○
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	○
Space in rear	○
Loading/storage	○
Appearance and design	◒
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	68%

NISSAN ALMERA (USED ONLY)

Oct 95 to Jan 00

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback, 4-dr saloon
Engines 1.4, 1.6 or 2.0 litre petrol, 2.0 litre diesel
Prices used around £2,250 to £5,350
Dimensions 4.12m x 1.92m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test 1.5/5

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 None
1995 to 1997 None

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	○	★
Problems	–	★	★
Faults	–	★	★

There's certainly room here for improvement but, despite the ageing design, the old Almera's reliability reflects Nissan's long-standing record for build quality.

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	◒
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	○
Space in rear	○
Loading/storage	●
Appearance and design	●
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	◒
Recommend to a friend	51%

NISSAN ALMERA TINO

from Jul 00

DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr MPV
Engines 1.8 or 2.0 litre petrol, 2.2 litre diesel
Prices new £12,720 (1.8S) to £17,175 (2.2dCi SVE 136PS)
Dimensions 4.27m x 1.76m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Average
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 4/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 1.8 SE+

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Washers/wipers

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	★	–	–
Problems	○	–	–
Faults	○	–	–

The Tino offers an enjoyable drive and it's among the class leaders for safety and security. It's a new Best Buy.

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	☆
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	☆
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	○
Noise	○
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	68%

NISSAN MICRA (USED ONLY)

Jan 93 to Feb 03

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback
Engines 1.0, 1.3 or 1.4 litre petrol
Prices used around £2,000 to £6,500
Dimensions 3.71m x 1.78m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Poor
Crash test 2/5
Test model: 1.0 S 3-dr

A cheeky little runabout, but no class leader. A pretty reliable choice for a first car or for someone on a budget. Recently replaced by the new Micra.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Washers/wipers
1998 to 2000 None
1995 to 1997 None

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	○	○
Problems	★	★	★
Faults	★	★	★

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	○
Driving position and comfort	○
Ride quality	◒
Visibility/parking	★
Instrument layout	○
Space in front	○
Space in rear	○
Loading/storage	◒
Appearance and design	◒
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	○
Recommend to a friend	67%

NISSAN PRIMERA

from Feb 02

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr hatchback, 5-dr estate
Engines 1.8 or 2.0 litre petrol, 2.2 litre diesel
Prices new £14,435 (1.8S) to £20,320 (2.0 T-spec)
Dimensions 4.40m x 1.76m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation High
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 5/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 1.8 SE 4-dr

It has a couple of drawbacks – ride quality and storage – but the Primera scores quite well for safety and security. Owners like it, too, so it's a new Best Buy.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	–	–
Problems	○	–	–
Faults	○	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	○
Driving position and comfort	○
Ride quality	◒
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	○
Space in rear	☆
Loading/storage	◒
Appearance and design	☆
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	76%

NISSAN PRIMERA (USED ONLY)

Nov 96 to Jan 02

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr hatchback, 5-dr estate
Engines 1.6, 1.8 or 2.0 litre petrol, 1.8 or 2.0 litre LPG/petrol, 2.0 litre diesel
Prices used around £2,500 to £9,800
Dimensions 4.44m x 1.96m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 4/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 3/5
Test model: 2.0i SLX 4-dr

The old Primera's reliability seems to have slipped slightly in its later years. It still has few troublespots, though, so it could be a good choice for a used buy.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None
1998 to 2000 Washers/wipers
1995 to 1997 None

RELIABILITY

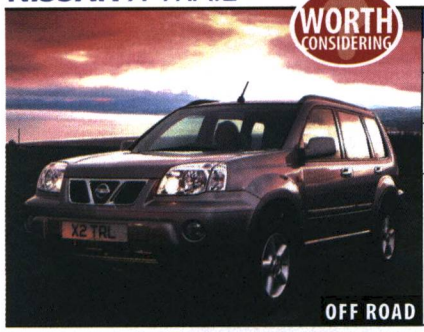
Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	○	★
Problems	○	★	★
Faults	○	○	★

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience		☆
Driving position and comfort		○
Ride quality		○
Visibility/parking	saloon	◒
	hatchback	○
	estate	◒
Instrument layout		☆
Space in front		☆
Space in rear		☆
Loading/storage		☆
Appearance and design		●
Noise		◒
Heating and ventilation		○
Recommend to a friend		67%

NISSAN X-TRAIL

from Oct 01



DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr estate
Engines 2.0 or 2.5 litre petrol, 2.2 litre diesel
Prices new £16,570 (2.0 S) to £20,710 (2.2 Di SVE)
Dimensions 4.51m x 1.77m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Average
Fuel Low
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test 4/5

Very popular with owners, the X-Trail has bags of space and shouldn't let you down. It's also not too much of a fuel guzzler.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Central locking

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	★	–	–
Problems	○	–	–
Faults	○	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	○
Ride quality	☆
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	◒
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	☆
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	○
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	◒
Recommend to a friend	81%

PEUGEOT 106

from Sep 91

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback
Engines 1.0, 1.1, 1.3, 1.4 or 1.6 litre petrol, 1.4 or 1.5 litre diesel
Prices new £6,170 (1.1 Independence Ltd Edition) to £11,615 (1.6 GTi)
Dimensions 3.68m x 1.89m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Low
Depreciation Average
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 2/10
Safety
Overall Poor
Crash test n/a
Test model: 1.1 Zest 1 3-dr

The ageing 106 isn't a patch on most of its modern competitors. It's had its day and should've been put to grass long ago.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None
1998 to 2000 Washers/wipers
1995 to 1997 Exhaust or emission control system (petrol), some engine electrics (diesel), cam belt/timing belt (diesel)

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	○	○
Problems	○	★	○
Faults	○	○	○
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	–	–	○
Problems	–	–	○
Faults	–	–	○

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel ●	petrol	◒
Driving position and comfort			◒
Ride quality			◒
Visibility/parking			☆
Instrument layout			◒
Space in front			◒
Space in rear			◒
Loading/storage			☆
Appearance and design			○
Noise	diesel ●	petrol	○
Heating and ventilation			○
Recommend to a friend			38%

PEUGEOT 206

from Oct 98

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback, 5-dr estate, 2-dr cabriolet
Engines 1.1, 1.4, 1.6 or 2.0 litre petrol, 1.4, 1.9 or 2.0 litre diesel
Prices new £7,865 (1.1 Style 3-dr) to £16,515 (2.0 Coupé Cabriolet)
Dimensions 3.84m x 1.88m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Very low
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Poor
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 1.1 LX 5-dr

A little better than the 106. Owners say that the 206 is stylish, but the driving experience is mixed and it lags behind class leaders for safety and security.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Dashboard switches/control stalks, rainwater seals, seats/seat adjusters
1998 to 2000 Exhaust or emission control system (petrol), seats/seat adjusters

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	○	–
Problems	○	○	–
Faults	○	○	–
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	○	○	–
Problems	○	★	–
Faults	○	○	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel ☆	petrol	○
Driving position and comfort			◒
Ride quality			☆
Visibility/parking			◒
Instrument layout			○
Space in front			○
Space in rear			◒
Loading/storage			☆
Appearance and design			★
Noise	diesel ◒	petrol	○
Heating and ventilation			☆
Recommend to a friend			59%

PEUGEOT 306

from Apr 93

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatch, 2-dr cabriolet, 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate

Engines 1.4, 1.6, 1.8 or 2.0 litre petrol, 1.9 or 2.0 litre diesel

Prices new £16,315 (1.8 16V S Cabrio) to £16,965 (1.6 S Cabrio Auto)

Dimensions 4.03m x 1.68m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 3/5
Test model: 1.4 LX

Quite a range of troublespots should warn you off this car. Only the Cabriolet version is still sold.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Washers/wipers, braking system components
1998 to 2000 Cooling system, battery, ignition system, washers/wipers, air conditioning, braking system components
1995 to 1997 Cooling system, battery, other engine electrics, cylinder head/cylinder head gasket, central locking, braking system components

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	○	○
Problems	○	○	●
Faults	○	●	●

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience				◒
Driving position and comfort				◒
Ride quality	diesel	★	petrol	☆
Visibility/parking	saloon			○
	hatchback			☆
	estate			☆
Instrument layout				○
Space in front				◒
Space in rear				◒
Loading/storage	saloon			☆
	hatchback			◒
	estate			○
Appearance and design				○
Noise	diesel	●	petrol	◒
Heating and ventilation				○
Recommend to a friend				46%

PEUGEOT 307

from Apr 01

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatch, 5-dr small MPV/estate, 2-dr cabriolet

Engines 1.4, 1.6 or 2.0 litre petrol, 1.4 or 2.0 diesel

Prices new £10,845 (1.4 Style 3-dr) to £16,560 (2.0HDi 110 SE)

Dimensions 4.21m x 1.99m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Average
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 4/10 (SW: 5/10)
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 1.6 Rapier 5-dr

The SW model has marginally better security than the 307 hatchback, though both are good. Watch out for reliability – the number of troublespots is high for a modern design.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Exhaust or emission control system (petrol), dashboard switches/control stalks, non-engine electrics, handles/locks, seats/seat adjusters, carpets/upholstery, other interior equipment

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	–	–
Problems	●	–	–
Faults	○	–	–
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	○	–	–
Problems	●	–	–
Faults	●	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience				○
Driving position and comfort				☆
Ride quality	diesel	☆	petrol	○
Visibility/parking				☆
Instrument layout				○
Space in front				☆
Space in rear				☆
Loading/storage				○
Appearance and design				☆
Noise				☆
Heating and ventilation				○
Recommend to a friend				63%

PEUGEOT 406

from Feb 96

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate, 2-dr coupé

Engines 1.8, 2.0, 2.2 or 3.0 litre petrol, 1.9, 2.0, 2.1 or 2.2 litre diesel

Prices new £13,330 (1.8L) to £25,813 (3.0)

Dimensions 4.55m x 1.98m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation High
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 4/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 3/5
Test model: GLX 2.0 Hdi 4-dr

The 406 has lots of troublespots and lags behind the competition. Depreciation levels are high too.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Dashboard switches/control stalks, lights/light units, washers/wipers, braking system components
1998 to 2000 Exhaust or emission control system (petrol), fuel system (diesel), cooling system (diesel), some main engine components (diesel), lights/light units, braking system components
1995 to 1997 Fuel system (petrol), exhaust or emission control system, cooling system (diesel), some engine electrics (diesel), washers/wipers, braking system components

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	○	○
Problems	–	●	○
Faults	–	●	○
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	○	○	○
Problems	●	○	●
Faults	●	●	○

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel	◒	petrol	●
Driving position and comfort				○
Ride quality	diesel	★	petrol	☆
Visibility/parking	saloon			○
	estate			◒
Instrument layout				◒
Space in front				○
Space in rear				☆
Loading/storage	saloon			☆
	estate			★
Appearance and design				○
Noise	diesel	◒	petrol	☆
Heating and ventilation				☆
Recommend to a friend				55%

RENAULT CLIO

from May 98

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback
Engines 1.2, 1.4, 1.6, 2.0 or 3.0 litre petrol, 1.5 litre diesel
Prices new £7,470 (1.2 Authentique 3-dr) to £26,815 (3.0)
Dimensions 3.82m x 1.94m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Average
Fuel Low
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 1.2 Expression 3-dr

A reasonable all-rounder but later models are showing signs of the electrical faults seen in some other Renaults.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Engine electrics, some non-engine electrics, airbags, other interior equipment
1998 to 2000 None

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	○	–
Problems	○	★	–
Faults	○	★	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	☆
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	○
Space in front	○
Space in rear	◒
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	○
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	○
Recommend to a friend	58%

RENAULT ESPACE (USED ONLY)

Apr 97 to Oct 02

DETAILS

Body styles MPV with 5, 6 or 7 seats
Engines 2.0, 2.2 or 3.0 litre petrol, 2.2 litre diesel
Prices used from around £7,800 to £19,500
Dimensions 4.52m x 2.07m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test 4/5

Renault set the original standards for MPVs in Europe, but this model doesn't impress for drive and comfort. The recently-launched new version needs to be much better.

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 Cooling system, battery, air conditioning, clutch, braking system components, interior equipment

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	○	–
Problems	–	●	–
Faults	–	●	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	◒
Driving position and comfort	◒
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	◒
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	☆
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	55%

RENAULT LAGUNA

from Dec 00

DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr hatchback, 5-dr estate
Engines 1.6, 1.8, 2.0 or 3.0 litre petrol, 1.9 or 2.2 litre diesel
Prices new £14,340 (1.6 16V Authentique) to £23,215 (3.0 V6 24V Initiale estate auto)
Dimensions 4.58m x 2.06m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Average
Fuel Very low
Security
Theft of car 8/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Good
Crash test 5/5
Test model: 1.6 Expression 5-dr

Over half the owners would recommend this car to a friend. But their friends might spend a disproportionate amount of time on the hard shoulder.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Ignition system (petrol), fuel system (diesel), ignition system (diesel), dashboard switches/control stalks, some non-engine electrics, rainwater seals

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	●	-	-
Problems	●	-	-
Faults	●	-	-
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	○	-	-
Problems	●	-	-
Faults	●	-	-

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel ○	petrol	◒
Driving position and comfort			○
Ride quality	diesel ○	petrol	☆
Visibility/parking	hatchback		○
	estate		☆
Instrument layout			○
Space in front			◒
Space in rear			◒
Loading/storage	hatchback		◒
	estate		☆
Appearance and design			☆
Noise	diesel ◒	petrol	☆
Heating and ventilation			○
Recommend to a friend			53%

RENAULT LAGUNA (USED ONLY)

Apr 94 to Dec 00

DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr hatchback, 5-dr estate
Engines 1.6, 1.8, 2.0 or 3.0 litre petrol, 1.9 or 2.2 litre diesel
Prices used around £1,850 to £7,100
Dimensions 4.51m x 2.04m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 2.5/5
Test model: 1.8 RT 5-dr

The old Laguna has similar reliability problems to its replacement. A cheap, but not necessarily cheerful, used option.

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 Exhaust or emission control system, engine electrics, cam belt/timing belt, lights/light units, braking system components
1995 to 1997 Exhaust or emission control system, battery, cam belt/timing belt, lights/light units, some heating/ventilation components, rainwater seals

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	●	●
Problems	–	○	○
Faults	–	●	●

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience		●
Driving position and comfort		☆
Ride quality	diesel ○ petrol	☆
Visibility/parking	hatchback	○
	estate	◒
Instrument layout		○
Space in front		◒
Space in rear		○
Loading/storage	hatchback	☆
	estate	★
Appearance and design		○
Noise	diesel ● petrol	◒
Heating and ventilation		◒
Recommend to a friend		42%

RENAULT MÉGANE (USED ONLY)

Apr 96 to Aug 02

DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr hatchback, 4-dr saloon, 2-dr coupé, 2-dr cabriolet
Engines 1.4, 1.6, 1.8 or 2.0 litre petrol, 1.9 litre diesel
Prices used around £2,600 to £13,950
Dimensions 3.93m x 1.97m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 4/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 1.6e Sport 5-dr

The old Mégane is short on space and not particularly liked by owners. Look out for troublespots on older models.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None
1998 to 2000 Exhaust or emission control system, ignition system, washers/wipers
1995 to 1997 Exhaust or emission control system, cylinder head/cylinder head gasket, dashboard switches/control stalks, steering components

RELIABILITY

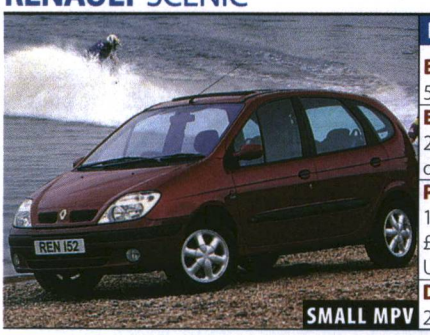
Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	○	●
Problems	★	○	○
Faults	○	○	○

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience		○
Driving position and comfort		☆
Ride quality		☆
Visibility/parking	saloon	○
	hatchback	◒
Instrument layout		●
Space in front		◒
Space in rear		●
Loading/storage		☆
Appearance and design		☆
Noise		○
Heating and ventilation		○
Recommend to a friend		45%

RENAULT SCÉNIC

from May 97



DETAILS

Body styles MPV with 5 seats
Engines 1.4, 1.6, 1.8 or 2.0 litre petrol, 1.9 litre diesel
Prices new £12,605 (1.4 16V Authentique) to £19,620 (2.0 The Ultimate Scénic)
Dimensions 4.13m x 2.01m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Low
Depreciation Average
Fuel Low
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 1.6 Expression

There's space aplenty for you and your luggage, but ride quality is poor. And watch out for those reliability troublespots, too. The Nissan Almera Tino is a better option.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Fuel system (diesel), other main engine components (diesel), gears/clutch
1998 to 2000 Exhaust or emission control system (petrol), ignition system (petrol), other engine electrics (petrol), washers/wipers, automatic transmission, braking system components, rainwater seals

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	●	–
Problems	★	○	–
Faults	○	○	–
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	○	●	–
Problems	○	○	–
Faults	○	○	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience		◒
Driving position and comfort		☆
Ride quality		●
Visibility/parking		☆
Instrument layout		●
Space in front		☆
Space in rear		★
Loading/storage		★
Appearance and design		☆
Noise	diesel ● petrol	○
Heating and ventilation		◒
Recommend to a friend		66%

ROVER 200/25

from Nov 95

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback
Engines 1.1, 1.4, 1.6 or 1.8 litre petrol, 2.0 litre diesel
Prices new £7,850 (1.1i) to £15,610 (1.6i XL)
Dimensions 3.99m x 1.91m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall High
Depreciation Average
Fuel Very high
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 3/5
Test model: 1.4 iS 5-dr

With fair safety and only middling security, the 200 gives pretty average performance at a high cost. Owners aren't keen, partly because of high fuel consumption.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None
1998 to 2000 Exhaust or emission control system
1995 to 1997 Steering components

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	★	○	○
Problems	○	○	○
Faults	○	○	○

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience			◒
Driving position and comfort			○
Ride quality			☆
Visibility/parking			◒
Instrument layout			○
Space in front			◒
Space in rear			☆
Loading/storage			☆
Appearance and design			○
Noise	diesel ●	petrol	◒
Heating and ventilation			◒
Recommend to a friend			40%

ROVER 400/45

from May 95

DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr hatchback, 4-dr saloon
Engines 1.4, 1.6, 1.8 or 2.0 litre petrol, 2.0 litre diesel
Prices new £9,830 (1.4iE) to £15,745 (1.8 Connoisseur)
Dimensions 4.32m x 1.92m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Average
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 4/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test n/a
Test model: 45 1.4 iS 4-dr

An unimpressive medium-sized car, with some expensive-looking troublespots on earlier models.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None
1998 to 2000 Battery (diesel), some non-engine electrics
1995 to 1997 Exhaust or emission control system (petrol), cooling system (petrol), cylinder head/cylinder head gasket (petrol), cam belt/ timing belt (petrol), some non-engine electrics, some heating/ ventilation components

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	○	○
Problems	○	○	○
Faults	○	●	○
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	–	○	○
Problems	–	○	○
Faults	–	○	○

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel ○	petrol	◒
Driving position and comfort			○
Ride quality			☆
Visibility/parking	saloon		◒
	hatchback		○
Instrument layout			○
Space in front			◒
Space in rear			◒
Loading/storage			☆
Appearance and design			○
Noise	diesel ◒	petrol	○
Heating and ventilation			◒
Recommend to a friend			42%

ROVER 600

Apr 93 to Oct 00

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon
Engines 1.8, 2.0 or 2.3 litre petrol, 2.0 litre diesel
Prices used up to around £5,300
Dimensions 4.65m x 1.90m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 4/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 1.5/5
Test model: 620 Si 4-dr

The 600 is reasonable for reliability, but crash tests show the age of the design. And, looking at what owners think, it's not much to write home about.

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 Exhaust or emission control system, electric windows
1995 to 1997 Exhaust or emission control system

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	○	★
Problems	–	○	○
Faults	–	○	○

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	○
Driving position and comfort	◒
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	◒
Instrument layout	◒
Space in front	◒
Space in rear	◒
Loading/storage	●
Appearance and design	☆
Noise	◒
Heating and ventilation	◒
Recommend to a friend	55%

ROVER 75

from Feb 99

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate
Engines 1.8, 2.0 or 2.5 litre petrol, 2.0 litre diesel
Prices new £16,660 (1.8 Classic) to £24,220 (2.5 V6 Connoisseur SE estate)
Dimensions 4.75m x 1.98m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Low
Fuel Low
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 4/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 1.8 Club

The Rover 75 is fairly weak on a couple of fundamentals and only average for reliability, but it still manages to impress owners.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Lights/light units, automatic transmission, some interior equipment
1998 to 2000 Lights/light units, some non-engine electrics

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	○	–
Problems	○	○	–
Faults	○	○	–
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	○	○	–
Problems	○	○	–
Faults	○	○	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel ☆ petrol	○
Driving position and comfort		☆
Ride quality	diesel ○ petrol	☆
Visibility/parking	saloon	●
	estate	◒
Instrument layout		☆
Space in front		○
Space in rear		☆
Loading/storage	saloon	○
	estate	●
Appearance and design		★
Noise		★
Heating and ventilation		☆
Recommend to a friend		79%

SAAB 9-3 (USED ONLY)

Mar 98 to May 02

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback, 2-dr convertible, 3-dr coupé
Engines 2.0 or 2.3 litre petrol, 2.2 litre diesel
Prices used from around £5,500 to £23,150
Dimensions 4.63m x 1.95m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test 4/5

Driving pleasure and build quality are the main attractions here. Generally, people seem pleased with this Saab, though they do complain about visibility and space in the rear.

TROUBLESPOTS

The reliability ratings are also applicable to the Saab 900. The owners' verdicts are not.
2001 to 2003 Fuel system
1998 to 2000 Heating/ventilation
1995 to 1997 None

RELIABILITY

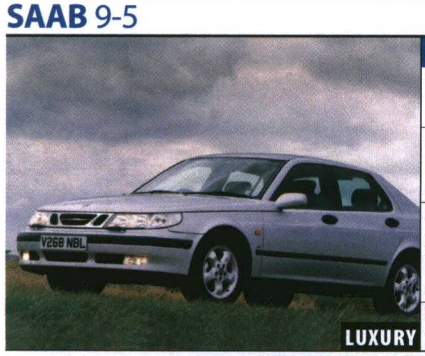
Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	○	○
Problems	○	○	○
Faults	○	○	○

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	◒
Visibility/parking	●
Instrument layout	○
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	●
Loading/storage	◒
Appearance and design	☆
Noise	○
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	69%

SAAB 9-5

from Jun 97



DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate
Engines 2.0, 2.3 or 3.0 litre petrol, 2.2 or 3.0 litre diesel
Prices new £19,815 (2.0t Linear) to £28,315 (3.0t V6 Vector estate auto)
Dimensions 4.81m x 2.05m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Low
Depreciation High
Fuel Low
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test 5/5

The well-liked Saab 9-5 is cheap to run compared with its luxury competitors, in spite of high depreciation. Early models are prone to breakdowns.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Fuel system, washers wipers, some non-engine electrics
1998 to 2000 Ignition system, some non-engine electrics

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	●	–
Problems	○	○	–
Faults	○	○	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience		○
Driving position and comfort		☆
Ride quality		○
Visibility/parking	saloon	●
	estate	○
Instrument layout		☆
Space in front		☆
Space in rear		☆
Loading/storage	saloon	☆
	estate	●
Appearance and design		☆
Noise		◒
Heating and ventilation		☆
Recommend to a friend		76%

SEAT ALHAMBRA

from Jun 96

DETAILS

Body styles MPV with 7 seats
Engines 1.8, 2.0 or 2.8 litre petrol, 1.9 litre diesel
Prices new £15,815 (2.0) to £22,815 (2.8)
Dimensions 4.62m x 1.81m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Low
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test n/a

The Alhambra is very similar to its Ford Galaxy and VW Sharan cousins. But, of the three, it seems to please owners the most.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Some non-engine electrics, heating/ventilation, paintwork chipped/lifted/peeled/blistered

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	–	–
Problems	●	–	–
Faults	●	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	◒
Instrument layout	○
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	◒
Loading/storage	○
Appearance and design	☆
Noise	○
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	72%

SEAT IBIZA (USED ONLY)

Oct 93 to Apr 02

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback
Engines 1.0, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6, 1.8 or 2.0 litre petrol, 1.9 litre diesel
Prices used up to around £11,700
Dimensions 3.85m x 1.81m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test 3/5

OK, but nothing to write home about. Slightly fewer good points than poor ones.

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 Cam belt timing belt
1995 to 1997 Handles/locks

RELIABILITY

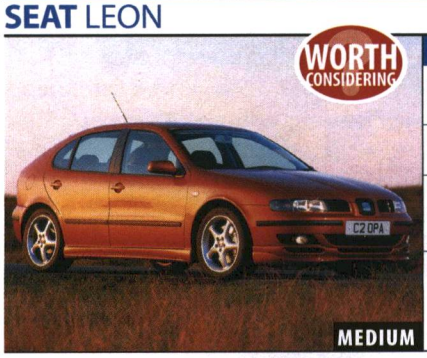
Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	○	○
Problems	–	○	○
Faults	–	○	○

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	◒
Driving position and comfort	◒
Ride quality	☆
Visibility/parking	◒
Instrument layout	◒
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	☆
Loading/storage	◒
Appearance and design	◒
Noise	○
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	52%

SEAT LEON

from Mar 00



DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr hatchback
Engines 1.4, 1.6 or 1.8 litre petrol, 1.9 litre diesel
Prices new £9,870 (1.4) to £16,815 (1.8 20V T Cupra R)
Dimensions 4.19m x 1.96m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Low
Depreciation Average
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 2/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test n/a
Test model: 1.6S 16V

Owners love the Leon. It's a driver's car, but lags behind the class leaders for safety and security. Also, rear seat and boot space is limited, and poor rear view hampers parking.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Rainwater seals

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	–	–
Problems	○	–	–
Faults	○	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	★
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	☆
Visibility/parking	●
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	◒
Loading/storage	◒
Appearance and design	☆
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	82%

SEAT TOLEDO

from Mar 99

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon
Engines 1.6, 1.8 or 2.3 litre petrol, 1.9 litre diesel
Prices new £12,860 (1.9 TDi S) to £16,515 (2.3)
Dimensions 4.44m x 1.75m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Low
Depreciation High
Fuel Low
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test n/a

Like the Leon, the Toledo's a pleasant drive but it doesn't make too many concessions to convenience. Here, it's space in the rear that's the big problem.

TROUBLESPOTS

There were too few questionnaire replies to give specific reliability information for this model. Overall, Seat is average for reliability

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	–	–
Problems	–	–	–
Faults	–	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	○
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	◒
Instrument layout	○
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	●
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	○
Noise	○
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	76%

SKODA FABIA

from Mar 00

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr hatchback, 5-dr estate
Engines 1.0, 1.2, 1.4 or 2.0 litre petrol, 1.9 litre diesel
Prices new £6,870 (1.2 Classic) to £12,895 (1.9 TDi Elegance estate)
Dimensions 3.96m x 1.83m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Average
Fuel Low
Security
Theft of car 8/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 1.4 16V Elegance 5-dr

Despite a few niggly problems and faulty parts, the Fabia is generally very popular. If you're worried about the questionable reliability, opt for a recent diesel model.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Washers/wipers, some non-engine electrics, handles/locks, exterior trim
1998 to 2000 Cooling system (petrol), steering components, interior equipment

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	○	–
Problems	●	●	–
Faults	●	○	–
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	★	–	–
Problems	○	–	–
Faults	○	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	★
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	☆
Visibility/parking	●
Instrument layout	○
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	★
Loading/storage	★
Appearance and design	◒
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	86%

SKODA FELICIA (USED ONLY)

May 95 to Dec 00

DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr hatchback, 5-dr estate
Engines 1.3 or 1.6 litre petrol, 1.9 litre diesel
Prices used up to around £4,000
Dimensions 3.86m x 1.90m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test n/a

Later Felicias were pretty unreliable. So, if you're thinking of buying one, get it thoroughly checked before you part with your cash.

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 Exhaust or emission control system, battery, central locking, paintwork chipped/lifted/peeled/blistered
1995 to 1997 None

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	●	○
Problems	–	○	○
Faults	–	●	○

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience		●
Driving position and comfort		○
Ride quality		●
Visibility/parking		☆
Instrument layout		☆
Space in front		☆
Space in rear		☆
Loading/storage	hatchback	◒
	estate	☆
Appearance and design		●
Noise		◒
Heating and ventilation		○
Recommend to a friend		59%

SKODA OCTAVIA

from Jun 98

DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr hatchback, 5-dr estate
Engines 1.4, 1.6, 1.8 or 2.0 litre petrol, 1.9 litre diesel
Prices new £9,745 (1.4) to £17,050 (1.9 TDi PD Laurin & Klement)
Dimensions 4.51m x 1.96m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Very low
Depreciation Average
Fuel Low
Security
Theft of car 8/10
Theft from car 2/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 1.8 SLX 5-dr

The Octavia offers a lot of car for not much money – as is reflected by its impressive level of owner recommendation.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None
1998 to 2000 None

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	–	–
Problems	○	–	–
Faults	○	–	–
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	★	○	–
Problems	○	○	–
Faults	○	○	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel ★ petrol	☆
Driving position and comfort		☆
Ride quality		○
Visibility/parking		☆
Instrument layout		○
Space in front		☆
Space in rear		◒
Loading/storage	hatchback	★
	estate	☆
Appearance and design		○
Noise		◒
Heating and ventilation		○
Recommend to a friend		90%

SMART

from Dec 99

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr hatchback, 2-dr cabriolet
Engines 0.6 or 0.7 litre petrol
Prices new £6,170 (0.6 Pure) to £16,175 (Crossblade)
Dimensions 2.50m x 1.52m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Very low
Depreciation Very high
Fuel Very low
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 1/10
Safety
Overall Poor
Crash test 3/5
Test model: Cabriolet Passion 0.6

If running costs, appearance and reliability were all that mattered, the dinky Smart car would be near the top of the tree. But this car doesn't make the grade for safety and security.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	★	–	–
Problems	★	–	–
Faults	★	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	◒
Driving position and comfort	★
Ride quality	●
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	★
Space in front	★
Space in rear	–
Loading/storage	◒
Appearance and design	★
Noise	●
Heating and ventilation	○
Recommend to a friend	76%

SUBARU FORESTER (USED ONLY)

Sep 97 to Sep 02

DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr estate
Engines 2.0 litre petrol
Prices used around £7,300 to £18,100
Dimensions 4.46m x 1.74m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test n/a

Plain looks and an unimpressive instrument panel don't spoil this car for its owners, who are well impressed on most fronts.

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 Clutch

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	○	–
Problems	–	○	–
Faults	–	○	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	○
Ride quality	☆
Visibility/parking	★
Instrument layout	◒
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	☆
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	●
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	86%

SUBARU IMPREZA

from Oct 00

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr hatchback
Engines 1.6 or 2.0 litre petrol
Prices new £13,770 (1.6 TS) to £27,810 (2.0 WRX Sti Performance Pk)
Dimensions 4.41m x 1.70m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Very high
Depreciation Low
Fuel Very high
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test n/a
Test model: 2.0 GX 4dr

A car driven for pleasure, but very expensive to run. Check that you can live with the noise and limited storage space before you buy.

TROUBLESPOTS

There were too few questionnaire replies to give specific information for this model. Overall, Subaru is average for reliability.

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	–	–
Problems	–	–	–
Faults	–	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	★
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	○
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	○
Loading/storage	◒
Appearance and design	◒
Noise	◒
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	82%

SUBARU IMPREZA (USED ONLY)

May 93 to Sep 00

DETAILS

Body styles 2-dr or 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate
Engines 1.6, 1.8 or 2.0 litre petrol
Prices used up to around £11,800
Dimensions 4.35m x 1.90m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test n/a

The old Impreza is rewarding to drive, with better ride quality than its replacement. Owners rate its design quality, noise and running costs as particularly bad – but it's still very popular.

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 Gearbox or differential

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	○	–
Problems	–	○	–
Faults	–	○	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	★
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	★
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	○
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	◒
Loading/storage	◒
Appearance and design	●
Noise	●
Heating and ventilation	○
Recommend to a friend	86%

SUBARU LEGACY/OUTBACK

from Jan 99

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate
Engines 2.0, 2.2, 2.5 or 3.0 litre petrol
Prices new £15,570 (2.0 GL saloon) to £26,815 (3.0)
Dimensions 4.60m x 1.70m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Average
Fuel High
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test 4/5

Another Subaru that's popular with its owners. Subaru must be doing something right, though it's certainly not making its motors pretty. A new version of the Legacy goes on sale in November.

TROUBLESPOTS

The reliability ratings are also applicable to earlier versions of the Legacy. Owners' verdicts apply only to models bought after January 1999.
1998 to 2000 None
1995 to 1997 Main engine components

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	○	○
Problems	–	○	○
Faults	–	○	○

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	◒
Ride quality	★
Visibility/parking	★
Instrument layout	◒
Space in front	○
Space in rear	☆
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	●
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	80%

SUZUKI WAGON R+

from May 00

DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr hatchback
Engines 1.3 litre petrol
Prices new £7,850 (1.3GL) to £8,365 (1.3 Special 5-dr auto)
Dimensions 3.50m x 1.62m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Average
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test n/a

The interior designers seem to have done a nice job here. Perhaps they should be let loose on the rest of the car.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Central locking

RELIABILITY

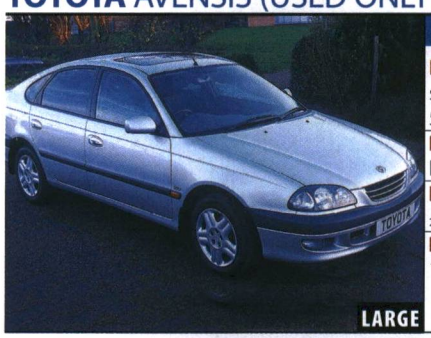
Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	–	–
Problems	○	–	–
Faults	○	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	◒
Driving position and comfort	★
Ride quality	●
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	★
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	◒
Noise	◒
Heating and ventilation	○
Recommend to a friend	71%

TOYOTA AVENSIS (USED ONLY)

Nov 97 to Mar 03



DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr hatchback, 5-dr estate
Engines 1.6, 1.8 or 2.0 litre petrol, 2.0 litre diesel
Prices used around £3,800 to £12,100
Dimensions 4.52m x 1.91m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 5/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 3/5
Test model: 2.0 GLS

Probably a sound second-hand purchase, but make sure you can park it safely before you buy.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Lights/light units
1998 to 2000 Exterior trim

RELIABILITY

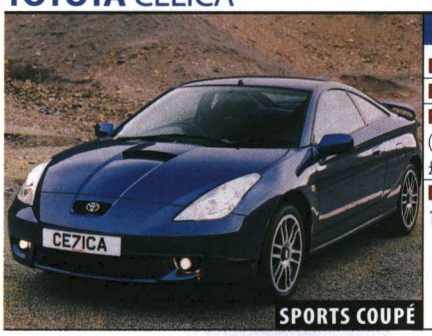
Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	★	–
Problems	○	○	–
Faults	○	○	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience		☆
Driving position and comfort		☆
Ride quality		◒
Visibility/parking	saloon	◒
	hatchback	●
	estate	●
Instrument layout		☆
Space in front		◒
Space in rear		☆
Loading/storage	saloon	☆
	hatchback	★
	estate	☆
Appearance and design		◒
Noise		☆
Heating and ventilation		☆
Recommend to a friend		68%

TOYOTA CELICA

from Oct 99



DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr coupé
Engines 1.8 litre petrol
Prices new £16,330 (1.8VVT-i coupé) to £20,815 (1.8VVTL)
Dimensions 4.35m x 1.96m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Average
Fuel Low
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test n/a

Another reliable and popular Toyota. The Celica's a good car but, if people thought they could live with its looks when they bought it, its appearance seems to have palled over time.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Exterior trim

RELIABILITY

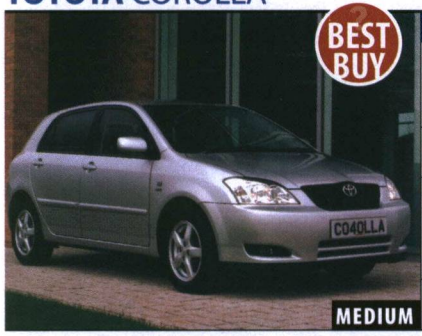
Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	★	–	–
Problems	○	–	–
Faults	○	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	☆
Visibility/parking	◒
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	○
Loading/storage	★
Appearance and design	●
Noise	○
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	85%

TOYOTA COROLLA

from Dec 01



DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback, 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate
Engines 1.4, 1.6 or 1.8 litre petrol, 2.0 litre diesel
Prices new £10,650 (1.4VVT-i T2 3-dr) to £15,815 (1.8 VVTL-i T Sport 5-dr)
Dimensions 4.18m x 2.60m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Low
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 1.6 T3 5-dr

The new Corolla has top-notch reliability. Its solitary black mark is for loading and storage.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None

RELIABILITY

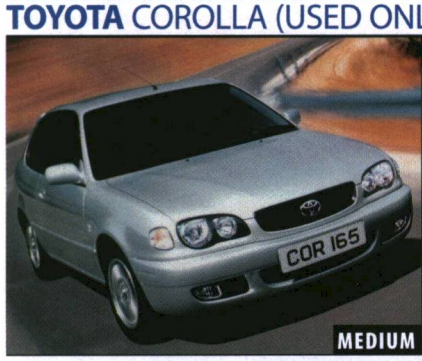
Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	★	–	–
Problems	★	–	–
Faults	★	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	○
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	○
Space in rear	☆
Loading/storage	◒
Appearance and design	○
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	78%

TOYOTA COROLLA (USED ONLY)

Jun 97 to Dec 01



DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback, 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate
Engines 1.3, 1.4 or 1.6 litre petrol, 2.0 litre diesel
Prices used around £3,300 to £8,100
Dimensions 4.29m x 1.87m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 2/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 3/5
Test model: 1.6 GS

More recent models of this Corolla aren't as reliable as we're used to from Toyota, but those from the mid-90s are still going strong. Interior space is lacking.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None
1998 to 2000 None
1995 to 1997 None

RELIABILITY

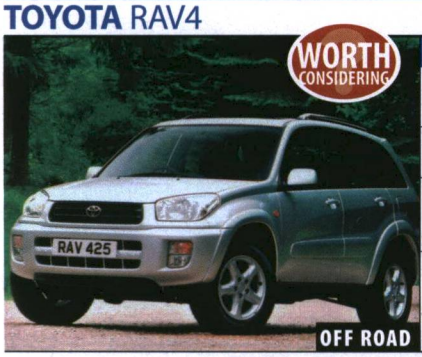
Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	★	★
Problems	○	★	★
Faults	○	★	★

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	○
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	○
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	◒
Space in rear	●
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	◒
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	68%

TOYOTA RAV4

from Aug 00



DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr estate
Engines 1.8 or 2.0 litre petrol, 2.0 diesel
Prices new £13,315 (1.8) to £20,510 (2.0 D-4DVX)
Dimensions 3.81m x 1.74m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Low
Depreciation Low
Fuel Very low
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test n/a

Good road manners, reasonable running costs and solid reliability make this 4x4 a desirable vehicle. Make sure it can carry all your goods and chattels, though – its storage is limited.

TROUBLESPOTS

Reliability and troublespots information is also for pre-Aug 00 models
2001 to 2003 None
1998 to 2000 None
1995 to 1997 None

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	★	○	★
Problems	★	★	★
Faults	★	○	★

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	☆
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	◒
Loading/storage	●
Appearance and design	☆
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	79%

TOYOTA YARIS

from Mar 99

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback
Engines 1.0, 1.3 or 1.5 litre petrol, 1.4 litre diesel
Prices new £6,865 (1.0 VVT-i T2) to £12,350 1.5 VVT-i T Sport 5-dr)
Dimensions 3.61m x 1.88m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Low
Fuel Very low
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 1.0 GLS 3dr

The Best Buy Yaris is a popular and very reliable car. Plenty of room for passengers in the back but, if you need boot space, opt for the Yaris Verso instead.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Paintwork chipped/lifted/peeled/blistered
1998 to 2000 None

RELIABILITY

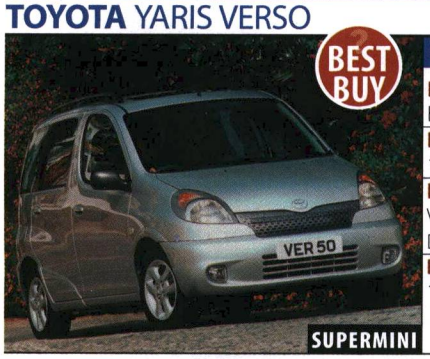
Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	★	★	–
Problems	★	★	–
Faults	★	★	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	◒
Instrument layout	★
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	★
Loading/storage	◒
Appearance and design	☆
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	87%

TOYOTA YARIS VERSO

from Jan 00



DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr hatchback
Engines 1.3 litre petrol, 1.4 litre diesel
Prices new £10,050 (1.3 VVT-i T3) to £11,560 (1.4 D-4DT)
Dimensions 3.86m x 1.92m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Very high
Depreciation Low
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test n/a
Test model: 1.3 GS

This Best Buy expanded Yaris offers greater carrying capacity than its little brother, and does even better for owner satisfaction.

TROUBLESPOTS

There were too few questionnaire replies in our survey to give specific information for this model. Overall, Toyota is among the best for reliability.

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	–	–
Problems	–	–	–
Faults	–	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	◒
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	★
Loading/storage	★
Appearance and design	◒
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	○
Recommend to a friend	92%

VAUXHALL AGILA

from Jun 00

DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr hatchback
Engines 1.0 or 1.2 litre petrol
Prices new £5,845 (1.0i) to £7,845 (1.2 16v Design)
Dimensions 3.50m x 1.94m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation High
Fuel High
Security
Theft of car 8/10
Theft from car 4/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test n/a
Test model: 1.0

It's cheaper to buy than its common-platform cousin, the Suzuki Wagon R+, but will also depreciate faster. Like the Wagon R+, the interior's well thought-out but it's not a driver's car.

TROUBLESPOTS

There were too few questionnaire replies in our survey to give specific information for this model. Overall, Vauxhall is poor for reliability.

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	–	–
Problems	–	–	–
Faults	–	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	●
Driving position and comfort	★
Ride quality	◒
Visibility/parking	☆
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	★
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	◒
Noise	○
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	54%

VAUXHALL ASTRA

from Feb 98

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatch, 4-dr sal, 5-dr est, 2-dr coupé or conv
Engines 1.4, 1.6, 1.8, 2.0 or 2.2L ptrl, 1.4, 1.6 or 1.8L LPG, 1.7 or 2.0L dsl
Prices new £9,605 (1.6i Expression) to £21,430 (2.0i Ed'n 100 T'bo conv)
Dimensions 4.11m x 1.97m

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Cam belt/timing belt (petrol)
1998 to 2000 Cam belt/timing belt (petrol), some engine electrics (diesel), lights/light units, some non-engine electrics

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Very high
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 1.6i LS 16v 5-dr

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	★	–
Problems	★	○	–
Faults	★	○	–
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	○	○	–
Problems	★	●	–
Faults	○	●	–

Despite reasonable safety, the Astra is behind the times on several fronts.

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel ◒ petrol	☆
Driving position and comfort		◒
Ride quality	diesel ☆ petrol	○
Visibility/parking	saloon	●
	hatchback	◒
	estate	◒
Instrument layout		○
Space in front		○
Space in rear		○
Loading/storage	saloon	◒
	hatchback	☆
	estate	○
Appearance and design		◒
Noise	diesel ◒ petrol	☆
Heating and ventilation		☆
Recommend to a friend		50%

VAUXHALL CORSA

from Oct 00

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback
Engines 1.0, 1.2, 1.4 or 1.8 litre petrol, 1.7 litre diesel
Prices new £7,865 (1.0i 12V Club 3-dr) to £13,480 (1.8 16V SR-i 5-dr)
Dimensions 3.82m x 1.96m inc mirrors

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Washers/wipers

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall High
Depreciation Average
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 1.0 12v GLS 3-dr

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	–	–
Problems	○	–	–
Faults	○	–	–

What can you say about a car that's this average? We're stumped. It's average.

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	○
Driving position and comfort	○
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	○
Instrument layout	○
Space in front	○
Space in rear	☆
Loading/storage	○
Appearance and design	○
Noise	○
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	56%

VAUXHALL CORSA (USED ONLY)

Apr 93 to Oct 00

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback
Engines 1.0, 1.2, 1.4 or 1.6 litre petrol, 1.5 or 1.7 litre diesel
Prices used around £2,300 to £5,300
Dimensions 3.73m x 1.76m inc mirrors

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 Exhaust or emission control system, central locking, paint lost its shine
1995 to 1997 Paint lost its shine, exterior trim

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test 3/5
Test model: 1.0 12v GLS

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	○	○
Problems	–	○	○
Faults	–	○	○

Way down in the ownership popularity stakes, this aged supermini has several weaknesses – not least its unrewarding driving experience.

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	●
Driving position and comfort	◒
Ride quality	◒
Visibility/parking	○
Instrument layout	○
Space in front	◒
Space in rear	○
Loading/storage	○
Appearance and design	◒
Noise	○
Heating and ventilation	○
Recommend to a friend	35%

VAUXHALL OMEGA

from Apr 94

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate

Engines 2.0 or 3.2 litre petrol, 2.0 litre LPG, 2.0, 2.2 or 2.5 litre diesel

Prices new £18,310 (2.2i 16V GLS saloon) to £30,810 (3.2i V6 24V Elite estate)

Dimensions 4.79m x 1.97m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs

Overall High

Depreciation Very high

Fuel Average

Security

Theft of car n/a

Theft from car n/a

Safety

Overall Good

Crash test 3/5

Test model: 2.5

The Omega will cost you dearly and is way, way off the pace in most areas. Early models suffer from particularly poor reliability.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Alarm/immobiliser

1998 to 2000 Fuel system, some engine electrics, cam belt/timing belt, dashboard switches/control stalks, central locking, handles/locks

1995 to 1997 Cooling system, ignition system, some engine electrics, cam belt/timing belt, central locking, steering components, handles/locks

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	●	●
Problems	○	●	●
Faults	○	●	●

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience		●
Driving position and comfort		◒
Ride quality		◒
Visibility/parking	saloon	●
	estate	◒
Instrument layout		◒
Space in front		☆
Space in rear		★
Loading/storage		☆
Appearance and design		●
Noise		◒
Heating and ventilation		◒
Recommend to a friend		49%

VAUXHALL VECTRA

from Mar 02

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr hatchback

Engines 1.8, 2.0, 2.2 or 3.2 litre petrol, 2.0 or 2.2 litre diesel

Prices new £14,710 (1.8i 16v Active saloon) to £21,030 (3.2i V6 24v GSi)

Dimensions 4.60m x 2.04m

EVALUATION

Running costs

Overall Low

Depreciation Average

Fuel Very low

Security

Theft of car 6/10

Theft from car 6/10

Safety

Overall Good

Crash test 4/5

Test model: 1.8LS

The Vectra's reliability seems good so far. But, for such an apparently well-built car, it's surprisingly unpopular with owners.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	★	–	–
Problems	★	–	–
Faults	★	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	◒
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	◒
Instrument layout	◒
Space in front	○
Space in rear	☆
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	○
Noise	◒
Heating and ventilation	○
Recommend to a friend	50%

VAUXHALL VECTRA (USED ONLY)

Oct 95 to Jun 02

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr hatchback, 5-dr estate

Engines 1.6, 1.8, 2.0. 2.2, 2.5 or 2.6 litre petrol, 1.8 or 2.0 litre LPG, 1.7, 2.0 or 2.2 litre diesel

Prices used around £2,400 to £11,600

Dimensions 4.48m x 1.85m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs

Overall n/a

Depreciation n/a

Fuel n/a

Security

Theft of car 6/10

Theft from car 4/10

Safety

Overall Fair

Crash test 3/5

Almost all black-mark ratings, and more troublespots than we could fit on the page. Steer clear.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Fuel system (petrol), some engine electrics (petrol), audio equipment, air conditioning, steering components, suspension components

1998 to 2000 Fuel system, exhaust or emission control system (petrol), cooling system (petrol), ignition system (petrol), some engine electrics, cam belt/timing belt (petrol)

1995 to 1997 Fuel system (petrol), ignition system (petrol), some engine electrics (petrol), cam belt/timing belt (petrol), and more

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	●	○	○
Problems	●	●	●
Faults	●	●	●
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	–	●	–
Problems	–	○	–
Faults	–	●	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel ●	petrol	◒
Driving position and comfort			◒
Ride quality	diesel ●	petrol	◒
Visibility/parking	saloon		◒
	hatchback		○
	estate		◒
Instrument layout			◒
Space in front			○
Space in rear			◒
Loading/storage	saloon		☆
	hatchback		◒
	estate		○
Appearance and design			◒
Noise	diesel ●	petrol	◒
Heating and ventilation			○
Recommend to a friend			33%

VAUXHALL ZAFIRA

from May 99

DETAILS

Body styles small MPV with 7 seats
Engines 1.6, 1.8, 2.0 or 2.2 litre petrol, 2.0 litre diesel
Prices new £14,300 (1.6i 16V Club) to £20,285 (2.0i 16V Turbo)
Dimensions 4.32m x 2.00m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Average
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 3/5
Test model: 1.6 16v Comfort

The big-selling Zafira is pretty popular with its owners but it has quite a few weaknesses for a car in such a competitive market.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Fuel system (diesel), engine electrics (diesel), braking system components
1998 to 2000 Alarm/immobiliser (petrol), lights/light units

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	○	–
Problems	○	●	–
Faults	○	○	–
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	○	–	–
Problems	○	–	–
Faults	●	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience		◒
Driving position and comfort		○
Ride quality		◒
Visibility/parking		◒
Instrument layout		○
Space in front		☆
Space in rear		★
Loading/storage		★
Appearance and design		◒
Noise	diesel ◒ petrol	☆
Heating and ventilation		○
Recommend to a friend		72%

VOLVO S40/V40

from Mar 96

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon (S40), 5-dr estate (V40)
Engines 1.6, 1.8, 1.9 or 2.0 litre petrol, 1.8 LPG, 1.9 diesel
Prices new £14,315 (1.6S saloon) to £20,365 (2.0T Sport Lux Estate)
Dimensions 4.49m x 1.90m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Very low
Depreciation Very low
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car 6/10
Theft from car 3/10
Safety
Overall Good
Crash test 4/5
Test model: S40 2.0 SE 4-dr

Reasonable reliability and good safety can't compensate for the design weaknesses here.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None
1998 to 2000 Battery, lights/light units, other non-engine electrics, braking system components, paint lost its shine
1995 to 1997 Lights/light units

RELIABILITY

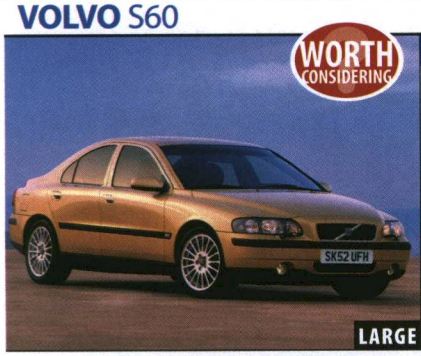
Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	★	○	★
Problems	○	○	○
Faults	○	○	○

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel ◒ petrol	○
Driving position and comfort		☆
Ride quality		◒
Visibility/parking	saloon	○
	hatchback	☆
	estate	○
Instrument layout		◒
Space in front		◒
Space in rear		◒
Loading/storage	saloon	○
	hatchback	●
	estate	●
Appearance and design		☆
Noise	diesel ◒ petrol	○
Heating and ventilation		☆
Recommend to a friend		50%

VOLVO S60

from Oct 00



DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon
Engines 2.0, 2.3, 2.4 or 2.5 litre petrol, 2.4 litre LPG/petrol, 2.4 litre CNG/petrol, 2.4 litre diesel
Prices new £19,815 (2.0 T S) to £35,210 (2.5 R geartronic)
Dimensions 4.58m x 1.81m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall High
Depreciation Very low
Fuel High
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 5/10
Safety
Overall Very good
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 2.0T

With class-leading safety and competitive security, this car is well liked by its owners. Running costs are high, though.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Lights/light units, central locking, other non-engine electrics

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	★	–	–
Problems	○	–	–
Faults	○	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	○
Visibility/parking	●
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	○
Loading/storage	●
Appearance and design	★
Noise	★
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	78%

VOLVO V70

from Jan 00

DETAILS

Body styles 5-dr estate
Engines 2.0, 2.3, 2.4 or 2.5 litre petrol, 2.4 litre LPG/petrol, 2.4 litre CNG/petrol, 2.5 litre diesel
Prices new £22,080 (2.4 S estate) to £38,730 (2.5 R estate Geartronic)
Dimensions 4.71m x 1.80m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Average
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test n/a

Design flaws, niggles and faults take the edge off the luxury here. Loading and storage are impressive, though.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Alarm/immobiliser, lights/light units, central locking, other non-engine electrics
1998 to 2000 Lights/light units, suspension components

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	○	–
Problems	●	○	–
Faults	●	●	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel ○ petrol	◒
Driving position and comfort		○
Ride quality		◒
Visibility/parking		◒
Instrument layout		○
Space in front		○
Space in rear		◒
Loading/storage		★
Appearance and design		○
Noise		○
Heating and ventilation		○
Recommend to a friend		69%

VOLVO S70/V70/850 (USED ONLY)

Jun 92 to Sep 00

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate
Engines 2.0, 2.3, 2.4 litre petrol, 2.4 litre LPG/petrol or CNG/petrol, 2.5 litre diesel
Prices used up to around £15,400
Dimensions 4.72m x 2.03m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test 4/5

More reliable than the current version of the V70, and with good safety for a car of its age.

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 Battery, some non-engine electrics, gearbox or differential, braking system components, steering components
1995 to 1997 Battery, lights/light units, some non-engine electrics, air conditioning

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	○	○
Problems	–	○	○
Faults	–	○	○

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience		◒
Driving position and comfort		○
Ride quality		◒
Visibility/parking	saloon	◒
	estate	☆
Instrument layout		◒
Space in front		○
Space in rear		☆
Loading/storage		☆
Appearance and design		◒
Noise		◒
Heating and ventilation		○
Recommend to a friend		69%

VOLVO S80

from Mar 98

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon
Engines 2.0, 2.4, 2.5, 2.8 or 2.9 litre petrol, 2.4 litre bi-fuel, 2.4 or 2.5 litre diesel
Prices new £22,690 (2.0T S) to £40,036 (2.9 T6 Executive)
Dimensions 4.83m x 2.10m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Low
Depreciation Average
Fuel Low
Security
Theft of car 8/10
Theft from car 5/10
Safety
Overall Very good
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 2.4

A class leader for safety, but not so remarkable for security, the S80's by no means perfect. Set against some other luxury models, though, it does provide reasonable value for money.

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 Lights/light units, central locking, steering components

RELIABILITY

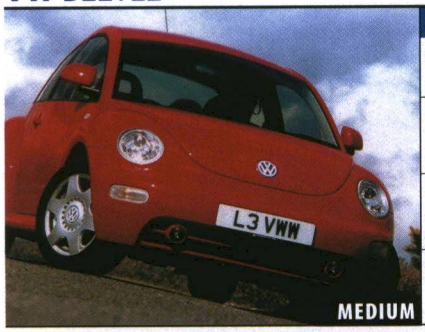
Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	★	–
Problems	–	○	–
Faults	–	●	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	○
Ride quality	◒
Visibility/parking	◒
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	○
Space in rear	★
Loading/storage	◒
Appearance and design	☆
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	76%

VW BEETLE

from Jan 00



DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr hatchback, 2-dr cabriolet
Engines 1.6, 1.8, 2.0 or 2.3 litre petrol, 1.9 litre diesel
Prices new £11,830 (1.6 hatchback) to £17,930 (2.3 V5 sport)
Dimensions 4.09m x 1.84m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Very low
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 5/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 2.0

The new Beetle seems to have inherited some of the design constraints of the original. On the other hand, it drives well and holds its value nicely.

TROUBLESPOTS

There were too few questionnaire replies to give specific information for this model. Overall, VW is poor for reliability.

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	–	–
Problems	–	–	–
Faults	–	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	☆
Visibility/parking	●
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	★
Space in rear	●
Loading/storage	●
Appearance and design	★
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	63%

VW BORA

from Feb 99

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon
Engines 1.6, 1.8, 2.0, 2.3 or 2.8 litre petrol, 1.9 litre diesel
Prices new £13,030 (1.6 S) to £19,565 (2.8)
Dimensions 4.38m x 2.02m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall High
Depreciation Low
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car 8/10
Theft from car 4/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test n/a
Test model: 1.9 Tdi

The Bora's a competent car in most respects,though there's not much space for rear passengers. Reliability is average and it all comes at quite a high cost.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None
1998 to 2000 Central locking

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	○	–
Problems	○	○	–
Faults	○	○	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	○
Ride quality	☆
Visibility/parking	○
Instrument layout	☆
Space in front	○
Space in rear	◒
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	☆
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	○
Recommend to a friend	64%

VW GOLF

from Nov 97

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback, 5-dr estate, 2-dr cabriolet
Engines 1.4, 1.6, 1.8, 2.0, 2.3, 2.8 or 3.2 litre petrol, 1.9 litre diesel
Prices new £10,730 (1.4E 3-dr) to £22,780 (3.2 R32 5-dr)
Dimensions 4.15m x 2.02m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall High
Depreciation Average
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 2/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 1.6S 5-dr

Recent petrol models seem to struggle on the reliability front, with an above-average number of breakdowns and faults. Quite an expensive car to run, for its size, but still well liked.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Ignition system (petrol), some engine electrics (petrol)
1998 to 2000 Alarm/immobiliser (diesel), electric windows, central locking, handles/locks

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	●	○	–
Problems	○	●	–
Faults	●	○	–
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	○	○	–
Problems	★	○	–
Faults	★	○	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel	☆	petrol	○
Driving position and comfort				○
Ride quality	diesel	◒	petrol	○
Visibility/parking				☆
Instrument layout				☆
Space in front				○
Space in rear				◒
Loading/storage				○
Appearance and design				☆
Noise	diesel	○	petrol	☆
Heating and ventilation				○
Recommend to a friend				68%

VW GOLF/VENTO (USED ONLY)

Feb 92 to Feb 98

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback, 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate, 2-dr cabriolet

Engines 1.4, 1.6, 1.8, 2.0 or 2.8 litre petrol, 1.9 litre diesel

Prices used up to around £7,900

Dimensions 4.02m x 1.89m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a

Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a

Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test n/a

The rather dated Golf disappoints in many key areas. And it's not much of a looker, either.

TROUBLESPOTS

1995 to 1997 Exhaust or emission control system (petrol), ignition system (petrol), some engine electrics (diesel), electric windows, paintwork chipped/lifted/peeled/blistered

RELIABILITY

Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	–	○
Problems	–	–	★
Faults	–	–	○
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	–	–	○
Problems	–	–	○
Faults	–	–	○

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel ○	petrol	◒
Driving position and comfort			○
Ride quality	diesel ◒	petrol	○
Visibility/parking			☆
Instrument layout			○
Space in front			○
Space in rear			○
Loading/storage	hatchback		○
	estate		★
Appearance and design			◒
Noise	diesel ●	petrol	◒
Heating and ventilation			◒
Recommend to a friend			54%

VW LUPO

from Feb 99

DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr hatchback

Engines 1.0, 1.4 or 1.6 litre petrol, 1.4 or 1.7 litre diesel

Prices new £7,315 (1.0) to £12,815 (1.6)

Dimensions 3.53m x 1.91m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Low
Fuel Average

Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 2/10

Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 1.4S

The Lupo comes with only three doors and not much boot space. The reliability of recent VW models is a worry, but safety is good for a car so small.

TROUBLESPOTS

There were too few questionnaire replies to give specific information for this model. Overall, VW is poor for reliability.

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	–	–
Problems	–	–	–
Faults	–	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	◒
Visibility/parking	○
Instrument layout	◒
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	☆
Loading/storage	●
Appearance and design	☆
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	○
Recommend to a friend	61%

VW PASSAT

from Feb 97

DETAILS

Body styles 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate

Engines 1.8, 2.0, 2.3, 2.8 or 4.0 litre petrol, 1.9 or 2.5 litre diesel

Prices new £14,715 (2.0S 4-dr) to £30,725 (4.0 W8 estate)

Dimensions 4.68m x 1.91m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Low
Depreciation Average
Fuel Average

Security
Theft of car 8/10
Theft from car 5/10

Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 2.0 S 4-dr

Low running costs and plenty of space are the Passat's main virtues. But it's not great to drive, and it has several troublespots.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Alarm/immobiliser, central locking
1998 to 2000 Battery (petrol), fuel system (diesel), some main engine components (diesel), lights/light units, electric windows, central locking, some heating/ventilation components, handles/locks

RELIABILITY

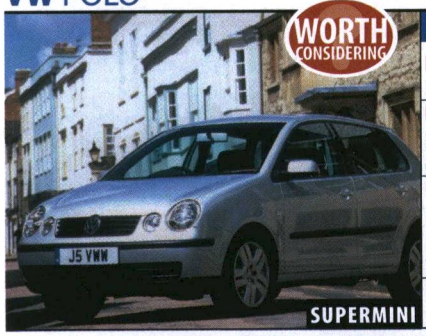
Petrol	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	○	–
Problems	○	●	–
Faults	○	○	–
Diesel	**01 - 03**	**98 - 00**	**95 - 97**
Breakdowns	○	○	–
Problems	●	●	–
Faults	○	○	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel ○	petrol	◒
Driving position and comfort			◒
Ride quality			◒
Visibility/parking	saloon		◒
	estate		○
Instrument layout			○
Space in front			☆
Space in rear			★
Loading/storage			☆
Appearance and design			○
Noise	diesel ◒	petrol	☆
Heating and ventilation			☆
Recommend to a friend			73%

VW POLO

from Jan 02



DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback
Engines 1.2 or 1.4 litre petrol, 1.4 or 1.9 litre diesel
Prices new £7,870 (1.2 E 3-dr 55bhp) to £13,025 (1.9 TDI PD Sport hatchback 5-dr)
Dimensions 3.90m x 1.65m

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Average
Fuel Low
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 1/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 4/5
Test model: 1.2 S 3-dr

The new Polo's poor security and slightly awkward parking let down this otherwise very competent supermini.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 None

RELIABILITY

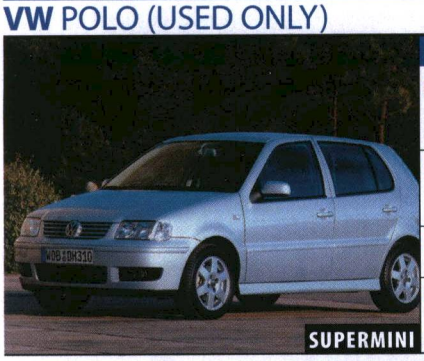
Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	–	–
Problems	○	–	–
Faults	○	–	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	☆
Driving position and comfort	☆
Ride quality	☆
Visibility/parking	◒
Instrument layout	○
Space in front	☆
Space in rear	☆
Loading/storage	☆
Appearance and design	☆
Noise	☆
Heating and ventilation	☆
Recommend to a friend	69%

VW POLO (USED ONLY)

Sep 94 to Jan 02



DETAILS

Body styles 3-dr or 5-dr hatchback, 4-dr saloon, 5-dr estate
Engines 1.0, 1.4 or 1.6 litre petrol, 1.4 or 1.9 litre diesel
Prices used up to around £10,100
Dimensions 3.74m x 1.83m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall n/a
Depreciation n/a
Fuel n/a
Security
Theft of car 7/10
Theft from car 2/10
Safety
Overall Fair
Crash test 3/5
Test model: 1.4 CL

An average supermini, with few high points. The new version tackles most of its design flaws.

TROUBLESPOTS

2001 to 2003 Ignition system
1998 to 2000 Ignition system, electric windows, braking system components, handles/locks
1995 to 1997 Paintwork chipped/lifted/peeled/blistered, paint lost its shine

RELIABILITY

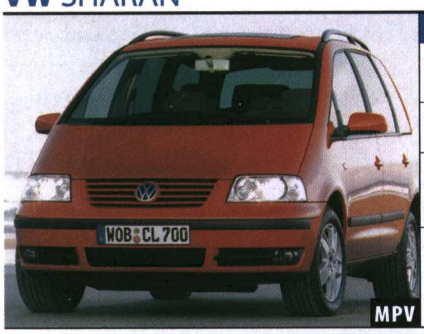
Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	○	●	○
Problems	○	○	★
Faults	○	○	○

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel ☆	petrol	○
Driving position and comfort			○
Ride quality	diesel ○	petrol	☆
Visibility/parking			◒
Instrument layout			◒
Space in front			○
Space in rear			○
Loading/storage			○
Appearance and design			○
Noise	diesel ◒	petrol	☆
Heating and ventilation			◒
Recommend to a friend			54%

VW SHARAN

from Aug 95



DETAILS

Body styles MPV with 5, 6 or 7 seats
Engines 1.8, 2.0 or 2.8 litre petrol, 1.9 litre diesel
Prices new £18,215 (2.0 SE) to £26,525 (2.8 Carat V6 4Motion)
Dimensions 4.62m x 2.15m inc mirrors

EVALUATION

Running costs
Overall Average
Depreciation Low
Fuel Average
Security
Theft of car n/a
Theft from car n/a
Safety
Overall n/a
Crash test 3/5

Irritating problems and faulty parts blot this car's copybook. The Seat Alhambra is very similar to this car and probably provides better value for your money.

TROUBLESPOTS

1998 to 2000 Some engine electrics, air conditioning

RELIABILITY

Ptrl/Dsl	01 - 03	98 - 00	95 - 97
Breakdowns	–	○	–
Problems	–	●	–
Faults	–	●	–

OWNERS' VERDICTS

Driving experience	diesel ☆	petrol	○
Driving position and comfort			○
Ride quality	diesel ○	petrol	◒
Visibility/parking			◒
Instrument layout			○
Space in front			○
Space in rear			☆
Loading/storage			○
Appearance and design			○
Noise	diesel ◒	petrol	☆
Heating and ventilation			◒
Recommend to a friend			55%

contacts

MANUFACTURERS

Alfa Romeo
0800 718 000
www.alfaromeo.co.uk

Audi
0800 699 888
www.audi.co.uk

BMW
0800 325 600
www.bmw.co.uk

Chrysler
0800 616 159
www.chryslerjeep.co.uk

Citroën
0800 262 262
www.citroen.co.uk

Daewoo
0800 050 607
www.daewoo-cars.co.uk

Daihatsu
0800 618 618
www.daihatsu.co.uk

Fiat
0800 717 000
www.fiat.co.uk

Ford
08457 111 888
www.ford.co.uk

Honda
0845 200 8000
www.honda.co.uk

Hyundai
01494 428 600
www.hyundai-car.co.uk

Jaguar
0845 303 2303
www.jaguar.com/uk

Jeep
0800 616 159
www.chryslerjeep.co.uk

Lexus
0845 278 8888
www.lexus.co.uk

Mazda
0845 601 3147
www.mazda.co.uk

Mercedes-Benz
0800 665 415
www.mercedes.co.uk

MG
08459 251 251
www.mg-rover.com

Mitsubishi
01285 647 774
www.mitsubishi-cars.co.uk

Nissan
01923 899 334
www.nissan.co.uk

Perodua
01491 415230
www.perodua-uk.com

Peugeot
0845 200 1234
www.peugeot.co.uk

Proton
01953 713 939
www.proton.co.uk

Renault
0800 52 51 50
www.renault.co.uk

Rover
08457 186 186
www.mg-rover.com

Saab
0800 626 556
www.saab.co.uk

Seat
0500 222 222
www.seat.co.uk

Skoda
0845 774 5745
www.skoda.co.uk

Smart
0808 000 8080
www.thesmart.co.uk

Subaru
0870 8502 503
www.subaru.co.uk

Suzuki
01892 707 007
www.suzuki.co.uk

Toyota
0845 275 5555
www.toyota.co.uk

Vauxhall
0845 600 1500
www.vauxhall.co.uk

Volvo
08457 564 636
www.volvocars.co.uk

VW
0800 777 192
www.vw.co.uk

RECALLS

The AA
www.theaa.co.uk/motoringandtravel/carrecall

Fleet News
www.fleetnewsnet.co.uk/recall/recall_information

Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA)
0117 954 3300
www.vosa.gov.uk

BUYING NEW

The importers, brokers and supermarkets listed below are only a sample. Their listing here doesn't constitute our endorsement.

Autobytel
0800 783 1514
www.autobytel.co.uk

Car Supermarkets
www.carsupermarkets.co.uk

Jam Jar
0845 608 1133 (UK sourced)
www.jamjar.com

OneSwoop
0800 279 2798
www.oneswoop.com

Overdrive Vehicle Sales Ltd
01506 828 278
www.carseekers.co.uk

Virgin Cars
0845 270 0985
www.virgincars.com

ONLINE CAR PRICE GUIDES

www.glass.co.uk
www.parkers.co.uk
www.whatcar.co.uk

INTERNET CLASSIFIEDS

www.autoexpress.co.uk
www.autotrader.co.uk
www.carseller.co.uk
www.exchangeandmart.co.uk
www.fishforcars.co.uk
www.loot.co.uk

AUCTIONS

Society of Motor Auctions
01788 538301

CHECKS AND INSPECTIONS

The AA
0800 234 999 (data check)
0800 085 3007 (inspections)
www.theaa.com

Automobile Buyer Services (ABS)
0800 358 5855
www.findit.co.uk/abs

DVLA Vehicle Check Service
0906 185 8585 (49p/min)

HPI
01722 422 422
www.hpicheck.com

RAC
0870 533 3660
www.rac.co.uk

What Car? History Check
0845 123 2617
www.whatcar.co.uk

GENERAL ADVICE

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency
www.dvla.gov.uk

Office of Fair Trading
Advice on your consumer rights.
www.oft.gov.uk/consumer

Trading Standards
A one-stop shop for consumer protection information.
www.tradingstandards.gov.uk

Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA)
Information about using vehicles in the UK.
www.vosa.gov.uk
MOT hotline
0845 600 5977

Other government sites
Information on your legal obligations.
www.motoring.gov.uk
Information and advice from the government vehicle crime reduction campaign.
www.secureyourmotor.gov.uk

ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION

Powershift
Information about changing to alternative, cleaner fuels.
www.powershift.org.uk

Travel calculator
To work out how much air pollution you produce during your journey.
www.travelcalculator.org

The Vehicle Certification Agency
To find noise and pollution emissions for most models of cars.
www.vcacarfueldata.org.uk

RUNNING COSTS

Tax bands
www.dvla.gov.uk/vehicles/taxation.htm

Which? Online running costs
Available to subscribers only.
www.which.net

Which? Extra

the icing on your membership

Which? Extra is our **exclusive** online service that's **free** to *Which?* members. Whatever your area of interest, you can be certain that Which? Extra will deliver the independent advice that *Which?* is well known for, advice that is almost impossible to find elsewhere.

With over 500 reports online, just 3 clicks of your mouse will bring you all the advice you need for your purchasing decisions – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

To find out what Which? Extra can do for you, visit the site on www.which.co.uk/whichextra and enter your user name and password (your surname) in upper case letters. For general advice or for help to log in, call 0845 301 2600.

WHICH? extra